



International Council¹ International Council Meeting – 2008

By William Wicks, SFO
National Historian

As you receive your TAU-USA Winter edition, representatives of national fraternities from all over the world will have met in Hungary – a country that not too long ago was a member of the Communist block of the Soviet Union – a sign of hope for religious freedom. The logo of this gathering is shown above.

The council meets every three years, and every six years (this year - 2008) is an election chapter; the international presidency will be elected. The Minister General (at this writing) is Encarnación del Pozo, OFS, of Spain.

Our representative to this meeting is Anne Mulqueen, our International Councilor. Anne will report on the responses, by our Regions, to a survey - answers to questions about the SFO as presented by the International Presidency. She will address the results to members of an English speaking language groups. The group, with other language groups, will address these, and other issues presented to them by the presidency, and will report on them to the general assembly.

The theme of the gathering is: *Profession of the Secular Franciscan and sense of belonging to the SFO.*

Brief History on the International Organization

Presently, the international organization is composed of lay Secular Franciscans representing the nations of the world. This wasn't always the case. In fact, the international council, as we know it today, was not established until October 4th, 1973, when it became official by the edict of the Ministers General of the four friar jurisdictions.

There were international congresses as early as the late 19th century, although the United States did not participate until the Congress of 1950 held in Rome, where both friars and lay Franciscans attended. A second International Congress was held ten years later, in Munich, Germany.

¹ Information taken from History of the Secular Franciscan Order, Volume II, 1943 – 1978 (to be published)

U.S. Pushes for an International Organization

In the Spring of 1946, National Chairman, Fr. Thomas Grassmann, O.F.M. Conv., pursued the quest for an International Organization. Early in April he met with the four Commissaries General and proposed to them a plan for an international federation of the Third Order patterned after the fashion of our National Board, established in 1922. At the request of the Commissaries General, he met again with them a few days later with a plan [a tentative constitution] to be submitted to the Ministers General. Inspired by Fr. Thomas' plan, the Commissaries General composed an experimental constitution, approved by the Ministers General. The introductory paragraph is quoted here: *In these times of religious and moral reconstruction it has been found opportune, as agreed among the Most Rev. Ministers General of the three families of the Seraphic Order and the Third Order Regular, to establish in the city of Rome an International Council of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis of Assisi.* However, it is not known if this International Constitution was promulgated with "authority." It is noted, that in 1957, International Constitutions were approved and promulgated as the "official" General Constitutions of the Third Order.

Resolutions produced by the 1950 International Congress addressed many specifics such as age of profession, temporary profession, youth, apostolates, and the establishment of a world Third Order day. But the paragraph of the resolutions that received the most attention was Votum 10, which begged a response from the Ministers General. The response defined, in detail:

- The Importance and Timeliness of the Third Order.
- Religious and Social Activities
- Burdens and Duties (a detailed exposé of the responsibility of the Franciscan hierarchy toward the Third Order)

The editor of the Franciscan Herald and Forum called it a *Magna Carta*.

The World Council

The World Council that was established in 1973 is similar to the International Council of today: lay leadership, with the various nations represented. The Council was based on an International Capuchin organization that preceded it by approximately three years. Manuela Mattioli of Caracas, Venezuela was the first Minister General. She was followed in turn by Emanuela De Nunzio of Italy, then presently, by Encarnación del Pozo.