

Sharing The Vision

News from the National Executive Council

by Jan Parker and Mary Bittner

Faithful, Fraternal and Fruitful

These words come to mind as we reflect on our 2017 National Fraternity Chapter. It was faithful to all that a Chapter should be. It was fraternal, uniting us in prayer, relationship building and ongoing formation. It was fruitful in all that was accomplished. We are thankful for your prayers and thankful for how the Holy Spirit led us in every aspect and each day of our five-day gathering of more than fifty National Fraternity Servant Leaders. An overview of the Chapter can be found in the special section in this issue of TAU-USA. We also highlight the following:

2017 State of the Order

The State of the Order is a talk given by the National Minister at each Chapter; that talk is based on a comprehensive report with the same name. The actual State of the Order report is sent out each year prior to Chapter. This year it is a 12-page report that includes an overview of the past year, a summary of accomplishments in each area of priority and an outline of the challenges that face us as an Order. Ancillary reports from our National Commissions and Committees are attached to the State of the Order for reference. If you are interested in learning more about the current state of our National Fraternity, this report is a “must read.” You can find the State of the Order report on our website under “Annual Reports to the OFS-USA,” or by requesting a copy from Jane DeRose-Bamman at janeombsfo@msn.com.

New Vision for Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism

There is a great need in our Order for individuals and local fraternities to become educated, inspired and motivated to action in the areas of Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism. To meet this need, we have given much emphasis to these areas during the past year. God is blessing our efforts. By different paths and on different timelines, three Chairs have emerged who are bringing new life and new vision to each of these priorities: Kathleen Molaro (Youth), Jane DeRose-Bamman (Vocations) and Willie Guadalupe (Multiculturalism). These three women are passionate and inspirational leaders who each bring with them a vision of what is possible.

At our 2017 Chapter, we brought these three “chairs” to the table, so to speak, by inviting Kathleen, Jane and Willie to speak to us. Their presentations were creative and captivating. Youth Commission Chair Kathleen Molaro showed a photo of an OFS gathering and asked, “Where are the youth?” Then, with a little humor, she got to the heart of the matter, emboldening us with the

confidence that we *can* engage youth – it’s not impossible, we simply need to summon the courage to take the necessary steps. Vocation Chair Jane DeRose-Bamman shared her experience on a plane to show that “there’s no vacation from vocations” – she talked with those seated near her and offered them a copy of the TAU-USA. Jane then showed us the power of a trademark, endorsed our new OFS-USA logo, and invited us to open the Vocations Tool Kit to find more ways to promote the Order. Willie Guadalupe’s presentation on “Multiculturalism and Diversity” was a passionate plea that we not isolate ourselves or ignore others because of language, culture or other barriers. She stressed the need for inclusiveness, stating that it is not only a matter of love, but of justice. Her presentation ended with practical and important recommendations and a heartfelt prayer for unity.

Jane, Kathleen and Willie are each gifted and enthusiastic, but they cannot bring renewal to these vital areas of Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism unless their enthusiasm is shared by each local fraternity and each Region. How can we accomplish this? It would be great to bring each of these women, with their zeal and ideas, to your local fraternity – that may or may not be possible – but each of them is available to you by email or phone. Each one of them is ready and willing to help you create dynamic initiatives to engage youth, promote vocations with enthusiasm and build relationships across cultures to bring us the richness of all our brothers and sisters.

What is *also* possible is to welcome their message and their recommendations. You might start by looking at their PowerPoint presentations, available on our website. Follow up by viewing these presentations together with your local fraternity or at a Regional gathering. Read the articles on Youth, Vocations and Multiculturalism in this issue, or past issues of the TAU-USA. Finally, and most importantly, spend some time *talking about what you can do*. What a change there would be in our Order if each local fraternity and each Region took these messages to heart and put these recommendations into action!

2018 National Fraternity Theme

With a new year also comes a new national theme. In 2018, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Pauline Rule, and our 2018 theme reflects this occasion. The theme chosen by those gathered in Chapter is: “Renewed and Confirmed: Live the Treasure!” It includes the tag line “Celebrating 40 years of our OFS Rule.” Our 1978 Rule is certainly a gift to celebrate. Let this Rule, this call to live the gospel life, guide us in the year ahead. Let us be faithful, fraternal and fruitful in living the Rule. Let’s be Franciscans!

The world needs this Franciscan spirit, this Franciscan vision of life. It is expected that you, beloved children, know it deeply, love it with passion, above all that you live it with the perfection that your state allows.

~ Pope Pius XII, *To the Secular Franciscans of Italy*, 1 July 1956