

Sharing The Vision

NAFRA Regional Executive Council Updates

by Jan Parker, OFS, National Secretary

“Proclaim God’s deeds, and do not be slack in praising him! (Tobit 12:6)

A profound experience holds profound meaning and our 2012 Quinquennial was an experience with profound meaning for us all. For five days, 617 Secular Franciscans gathered for a journey of spiritual renewal and discovery to discern together “What is God calling us to do or be in the 21st century?” The experience we shared and the answers we received are making a tremendous impact on our Order.

Here we are, a year later, and I see the energy from the Q in every activity of our Order, expressed in a myriad of ways. Priorities are being addressed by our national fraternity. Regions are enlivened as we implement what we have learned. There is spiritual growth and a hunger for more. It’s very exciting to see all of this from a national viewpoint, but my toes absolutely tingle when I see how experiences from the Q impact even a small group of four candidates from my local fraternity gathered for initial formation. Yes, this is happening!

So just how did we gather the thoughts of 617 Franciscans and translate them into a plan of action? It was quite a process. Our Quinquennial Committee crafted a beautiful program for visioning. Inspired by liturgies, gifted speakers and marvelous conversations, we met in small Q fraternities to consider a series of questions. Each group’s reflections were carefully recorded. In the final hours of the Q our 60-some facilitators met and a lively and intense distillation ensued. The process of bringing all these ideas together was not perfect, but it was perfectly Franciscan. The Holy Spirit danced in the room as we together approved a final list of key themes and insights. Now, how to present this to the general assembly? Tom Bello rose to the occasion. With love, joy and Franciscan simplicity, Tom masterfully shaped an inspiring summary of our call. It was a fitting end to the Q — but only the beginning of the impact.

In the following, the NEC collected written summaries of the discussions and categorized them into a 16-page “grand list.” Cindy Wesley discovered a quote that became the title of this

list: *“Gather the wisdom and weave a dream powerful enough to awaken a community’s soul.”* This list and Tom’s summary were wonderful resources for the National Council as we prepared for our October 2012 Chapter. At Chapter came the question: How do we best implement these ideas? Insights from the Q were quite evident as we unanimously chose a theme, established our national priorities and set a course.

In the past two issues of the *TAU-USA* we have shared the vision and the progress we are making. Our Formation, JPIC and Youth Commissions are strong, with infusions of new energy. Three newly-formed committees are diligently addressing the priorities of Spiritual Assistance, Communications and Vocations. A new committee focusing on development (endowments, bequests, etc.) has been established. We have two national gatherings this July — the Summer Seminar and the JPIC/Youth Confab. In traveling to 17 of our 30 regions since October, the NEC sees strong bonds of fraternity, greater commitment, new leadership and much joy. We have a wonderful national newsletter to keep us connected, and to top it off, there’s a lot of bridge building going on! Much more will continue to be written on our progress for future issues, but praise God that what is most important has been written on our hearts and is being reflected in our lives. May we continue to “Claim the Gift”!

(Tom’s summary, as well as the “grand list,” can be emailed or mailed to you - just ask!)

Plan now to attend the next Quinquennial gathering!

The tentative date for our next "Q" is July of 2016. What? Just four years from the last "Q"? Yes, just four years from Q 2012! Why? In 2021 we want to celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the first National Congress of what was then known as the "Third Order of St. Francis". The year "2021 is just nine years from "2012". We will gather in 2016 in order to have five years to prepare for this major event - the 100th "Q" Anniversary. Stay tuned for more details.