



National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA (OFS-USA)

2020 ANNUAL REPORT to CIOFS

According to the articles 51.2b, 62.2g and 66.2h GGCC, the OFS Fraternities send an annual report to the higher-level Fraternity. Please complete the questionnaire and send it to the Presidency before April 1st.

A. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. This report describes the last 2 years, which were: **January 2019 – October 2020**
2. This is the report of the National Fraternity of: USA
3. Report made by (name):
National Minister Jan Parker, OFS (contact) ofsusaminister@gmail.com
National Vice-Minister, Mary Bittner, OFS (contact) mbittner@umich.edu
4. Date of last National Elective Chapter: October 2018
5. Date of last Fraternal Visit: November 2016
6. Date of last Pastoral Visit: November 2016
7. Postal address of the National Council:
National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA
1615 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45202-6492
8. Was there a change in the composition of the National Council during the last year? If so, what changed and why? None other than from regularly scheduled Regional elections.
9. If there is an Executive Council: was there a change in the composition in the last year? If so, what changed and why?

No. There was no change. This council was elected in October 2018:

Minister:	Jan Parker OFS	ofsusaminister@gmail.com
Vice-minister:	Mary Bittner OFS	mbittner@umich.edu
Secretary:	Jane DeRose-Bamman OFS	ofsusasecretary@gmail.com
Treasurer:	Claudia Kauzlarich OFS	claudiakauz.sfo@gmail.com
International Councilor:	Awilda Guadalupe OFS	awilda.guadalupe@gmail.com
Councilor:	Donna Hollis OFS	donnadancerfeet@aol.com
Councilor:	Josh Molidor OFS	joshuamolidor@yahoo.com
Councilor:	Dennis Ross OFS	dennisross212@gmail.com

President-in-turn, Conference of National Spiritual Assistants:

Fr. Christopher Panagoplos TOR XtoferTOR@aol.com

10. **Did you get by purchase/donation/inheritance or sell/donate/lose assets/properties during the last year? If so, please give a short description.**

No, none of the above.

11. **Do you have questions/requests/suggestions to the Presidency? This can be with regard to any subject!**

11.1 Duns Scotus Formation Fund

The OFS-USA Duns Scotus Formation Fund supports formation efforts at the local, regional and national levels of our National Fraternity. We would welcome a discussion with the Presidency on how we might open the Duns Scotus Formation Fund to support grant requests from other national fraternities.

11.2 Communication from CIOFS

- A. We would like to receive brief reports on the work of the Presidency 2 or 3 times a year. We are often at a loss to know what is happening.

Examples of lack of communication:

- New Translation of OFS Rule: Earlier this year a new translation of the OFS Rule appeared and then disappeared from the CIOFS website. Why this translation was undertaken? Where do things currently stand? Is there a timeline for completion? We sent comments on the new translation but have heard nothing further.
 - Financial Report: Annually we would like to see a year-end financial report from the Presidency showing the details of income and expenditures in each area and the balance of funds on hand. How can we make a case with our membership to assist with funding if we do not know the financial situation of our Order?
- B. It would be helpful to be alerted when new formation material is posted on the CIOFS website. It would also be helpful to have a description in the subject line, and within the body of the email.
- C. It would be helpful to be alerted when a new issue of Koinonia, or other publication from the General Spiritual Assistants are issued or have been uploaded to the website.

11.3 Past requests that remain unanswered

In past annual reports we have made the following request but have not received an answer.

- On October 15, 2016 the CIOFS Presidency sent four supporting documents to provide guidelines for Art. 58, Art.76.2/94.5, Art. 77.2, and Art. 81.3 of the General Constitutions. Some sections of these supporting documents were difficult to understand. Might you review the translation and consider using simpler language?

STATISTICAL INFORMATION

<i>Number of Local/Regional Fraternities in National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2019	December 31, 2019
Canonically established Local Fraternities:	593	586
Emerging Local Fraternities:	43	45
Canonically established but inactive Local Fraternities:	54	54
Regional Fraternities:	30	30
<i>In the National Fraternity</i>	January 1 , 2019	December 31, 2019
Number of permanently professed members:	11,807	11,325
Number of temporary professed members:	---	---
Number of members in the period of formation:	1,051	915
Number of Fraternities/groups of Franciscan Youth:	0	0
Number of members of Franciscan Youth:	0	0
Number of groups of Franciscan Children:	0	0
Number of Franciscan Children:	4	4
Number of OFS Fraternities of permanent deacons:	0	0
Number of OFS permanent deacons:	96	96
Number of Fraternities of OFS priests (Const. 35,2):	0	0
Number of OFS diocesan priests:	30	30
Number of OFS Bishops:	0	0
Number of groups of members with private vows (36 GGCC):	0	0
Number of members with private vows:	8	8
<i>Number of Local Spiritual Assistants in the National Fraternity</i>	January 1, 2019	December 31, 2019
OFM:	96	77
OFM Conv:	33	27
OFM Cap:	54	42
TOR:	17	14
Poor Clares:	7	6

3 rd Order Franciscan religious brothers and sisters:	64	46
Other religious brothers and sisters:	9	6
Diocesan priest/deacons:	46	49
Members of OFS:	95	75
TOTAL number of local spiritual assistants:	421	359*
Number of Local Fraternities without Spiritual Assistants:	151	147

If there is a change in numbers between January 1 and December 31 of the last year of more than 5 %, please give an explanation.

*Note that many of our local spiritual assistants now serve more than one fraternity. See below, 9.1 Challenge: Declining Number of Spiritual Assistants

THE NATIONAL FRATERNITY

1. Did the National Fraternity have special formation projects/activities, and/or pilgrimages, and/or other spiritual activities (retreats, conferences etc.) in the last year? Please give a short description.

1.1 Formation Visioning Continues

Refer to our 2019 Report for the history of Formation Visioning.

In April 2019, a select group of 30 OFS National and Regional leaders and Spiritual Assistants met to develop the ideas that were generated at our August 2018 National Formation Visioning Workshop. During this meeting the Formation Visioning Project began to take shape.

In June 2019 the National Visioning Team, comprised of the NFC and 2 NEC members, met and finalized the Formation Visioning Project. This project was presented at our October 2019 National Fraternity Chapter, and approved by the National Fraternity Council.

The Formation Visioning Project will standardize the initial formation process and enhance ongoing formation throughout the USA. The project centers on four new initial formation texts to be published by the National Fraternity. The writing is currently underway. This project will be funded in part by a grant from the Duns Scotus Formation Fund. The texts are listed here with their working titles:

Let Us Begin (Orientation and Inquiry) and For This You Were Called (Candidacy) will facilitate the transformative process necessary for a commitment to live the Gospel life in fraternity.

Let Us Begin - Companion Guide and For This You Were Called – Companion Guide will provide background and supplemental material for the formator to use with Inquirers and Candidates.

In addition, we're putting together a guide for the formator, which will outline the responsibilities of the Formation Director and Team, and provide guidance for initial and ongoing formation at all levels.

These books incorporate the content and approach recommended by CIOFS in the past 18 years, and the Vision we were given: *greater emphasis to the Rule and Constitutions, Scripture, Franciscan Sources, Franciscan Spirituality, Fraternity, JPIC, Youth, multiculturalism, inclusivity, and special learning needs.*

1.2 Regional Formation Director Handbook was revised and re-distributed early in 2019.

1.3 Formation Friday

Formation Friday is a weekly message sent via our national listservs and Facebook. These evoke much discussion. The content is often excerpts from the For Up to Now manual and various other formation resources, including the Rule and the Admonitions.

1.4 Additional Formation Activities

- **Communication:** Formation Commission members maintained communication with their assigned group of Regional Formation Directors. A number of Regional Spiritual Assistants routinely share formation ideas and inspiring articles via national listservs.
- **JPIC Formation:** Our National JPIC Commission Chair publishes resources for Advent, World Day of Peace, Lent, Easter, Pentecost, and the Season of Caring for Creation. She provides an annual “12 Weeks of Franciscan Peace” program; and maintains an “Animate Peace” Facebook page.
- **TAU-USA:** Our national newsletter, the TAU-USA, features material for ongoing formation. It is mailed directly to each member’s home, and is posted on our website.
- **OFS-USA Website:** Formation materials have been organized, added and removed according to their usefulness and timeliness.

2. Did the National Fraternity have special social projects/activities in the last year? Please give a short description.

2.1 National Priority 2018-2021 - Fraternity Life

The National Priority of Fraternity Life is a major initiative for the current term (October 2018 – October 2021.) To help us achieve this priority we are providing resources on three aspects of fraternity life: Deepening our Franciscan Vocation, Growing in Fraternal Communion, and Cultivating Universal Kinship. The NEC has focused on building fraternity (1) during our visitations to the Regional Fraternities, (2) by outreach to our non-English speaking brothers and sisters, (3) through articles on fraternity in each issue of the TAU-USA, and (4) by providing resources on our website. It is gratifying to see the topic of fraternity being used for ongoing formation across our National Fraternity.

2.2 Franciscans International (FI) at 2019 National Chapter

We invited Franciscans International Board of Directors member Fr. Joe Rozansky OFM to speak to us about FI at our 2019 National Chapter. Support of Franciscans International is now a line item in our annual budget.

2.3 2019 JPIC Award

Our 2019 JPIC Award winner, Kent Ferris OFS, was honored for his advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees, who are among the people he serves as director of social action and Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Davenport, Iowa. Our 2020 JPIC Award winner will be honored at our October 2020 OFS-USA Chapter.

2.4 Oct. 2019 -- National Service Projects

Outreach to Immigrants and Refugees: Summer of 2019 - The entire National Fraternity was engaged in the donation of items needed by immigrants and refugees. The project culminated at our 2019 National Chapter where 1000 backpacks were filled.

Medicines for Venezuela and the Border: Fall of 2020 - The entire National Fraternity will engage in the donation of health care items needed by our sisters and brothers in Venezuela, as well as those who work at the US border. This project will be launched at our 2020 National Chapter.

H2O Project: The H2O project is ongoing throughout each year, with a special emphasis each Lenten season. Donated funds are contributed to organizations who serve those who have little or no access to clean water. In 2019, H2O project funds went to Stephen Smith, OFS and "To The Nations" to build wells in Uganda. In 2020 the awardees were Br. David Buer, OFM to supply water to migrants in Arizona deserts, and Wayne Wilson and the "K'eh Water Project" to bring water to indigenous people who have a shortage of water, especially during the COVID 19 pandemic.

2.5 JPIC Visioning

In August of 2019, thirty-five JPIC animators from across the country gathered with the JPIC Commission and NEC members to examine our approach to JPIC in the OFS-USA. We asked ourselves "*Where is God calling us? Where do we go from here? What direction should we take?*"

Our discussion revealed a misconception on the part of some of our members that persists from the days when JPIC was not seen as part of our Third Order vocation. We see a need to emphasize the insights of Vatican II and Catholic Social Teaching during initial and ongoing formation. Our members must realize that the work of JPIC does not belong only to those called to be animators or members of a JPIC commission, but rather every individual OFS member must incorporate JPIC into their life. Our particular actions for justice will vary, but must stem from our Franciscan vocation.

Our goal is to develop one "Franciscan-looking JPIC vision" that is motivated by our Franciscan spirituality, and clearly flows from the Rule and Constitutions. It's not just about having the right words or the vision of justice, but we need to live and speak it JUSTLY, courteously, in peace and with charity. This must be stressed in our formation programs.

2.7 JPIC – Statement on Racism

In response to the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others, the National JPIC Commission in partnership with the National Executive Council (NEC) wrote and publicized a statement on Racism. Several Regions followed suit. Our entire National Fraternity united with the wider Franciscan family in denouncing this sin, and taking part in appropriate actions.

2.7 National Database

Work continues on updating our National Database to take advantage of new technology and new security.

3. Did the National Fraternity organize activities related to Youth and/or Franciscan Children in the last year? Please give a short description.

Some local fraternities and individual members organize activities for youth or children on a regular basis. These include coloring contests, serving meals to parish youth groups, and ministry alongside youth. Members of our Franciscan Youth and Young Adult Commission along with Br. Scott Slattum OFM, a YouFra Animator, and YouFra member Ramcy Caballeros, attended our 2019 Chapter. Their presentation modeled how to build relationships with youth and young adults. From that point forward momentum has been building. An eleven-week FY/YA animator training series of Zoom gatherings was recently completed. Many Regions are now attempting outreach to youth and young adults and putting into practice the ideals discussed in Zoom training sessions. We now have two officially established YouFras, four JuFras (Spanish-speaking youth fraternities) working on getting established, one Emerging JuFra and one Emerging YouFra. Recorded Zoom presentations are now on the youth page of the national website along with formation materials and FY/YA Essential documents. Regular articles in TAU-USA promote what is happening across the country, offer resources, and build understanding of YouFra.

4. Are the materials and letters sent by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS received regularly by the National Council? Do you use the formation material on the CIOFS website? How are these publications used? Do you have any suggestions to make?

We regularly receive the emails sent to us from the Presidency. *Of special note:* (1) the presentations and reports from the March 24, 2019 CIOFS conference in Rome celebrating the Rule, (2) the materials we received for the Celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the OFS Rule, and (3) the letters from General Minister Tibor Kauser addressing the pandemic. These formation resources were inspiring. They were distributed widely, discussed during Regional visitations, posted on our website, and included in our National Newsletter. Many of our fraternities use the formation materials that are sent.

NOTE: It would be helpful to be alerted when new formation material is posted on the CIOFS website. It would also be helpful to have a description in the subject line, and within the body of the email.

5. Do the National and Regional Spiritual Assistants have access to the publications of the General Spiritual Assistants? How are these publications used? Do you have any suggestions to make?

Yes, the National and Regional Spiritual Assistants have access to these publications. They are used by some of our Formation teams and Spiritual Assistants. We especially appreciated the presentations from the November 2019 Congress of National Spiritual Assistants to the OFS held in Rome. These publications are useful for ongoing formation and serve as a resource for our Spiritual Assistants.

NOTE: It would be helpful to be alerted when a new issue of Koinonia, or other publication from the General Spiritual Assistants are issued or have been uploaded to the website.

6. Are the members of the Fraternities sensitive to the need for economic contributions for the support of the structures of the OFS at the various levels? Does the National Fraternity have problems covering its costs and/or the financial contribution to the International Fraternity?

Our members are very aware of the financial needs of the Order. They are generous in their support of the OFS at every level. We have no problem covering our regular financial contribution to the International Fraternity. We encourage our members to donate to CIOFS and have set up a special “CIOFS Solidarity Fund” for this purpose.

NOTE: We have set aside \$20,000 to support the CIOFS Terms of Reference when those programs begin.

7. How is the contact of the National Fraternity with the Bishops and the local Church communities?

7.1 Contact with Bishops and Local Church communities

Our brothers and sisters at all levels maintain contact with the local Church and diocesan bishops in a variety of ways. Direct involvement in local parish ministries is strong. Newsletters and greeting cards are sent to local Bishops. We invite the local ordinary to the annual OFS-USA National Fraternity Chapter.

7.2 Building Relationships within the Wider Franciscan Family

Our interactions with the wider Franciscan family grew stronger in 2019-2020:

Third Order Franciscan Federation

The OFS-USA is taking a more active role in the Franciscan Federation, an organization which unites all Franciscan Third Order Religious Sisters and Brothers. We are engaged with them in monthly phone calls which include representatives from the following entities: *Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities, Franciscan Intellectual Tradition, Franciscan Action Network, Franciscan Media, Franciscan Pilgrimages, Franciscan Federation, Lutheran Franciscans, Secular Franciscan Order, Franciscans International, Franciscan Mission Service*. We are working with the Federation in planning the next annual conference in 2021. This will be an invitational event for the entire Franciscan family in the USA.

Franciscan Family Forum

In August, 2019, the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants of the Secular Franciscan Order organized a meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, “Life Giving Union – Discernment and Discussion”,

which was attended by national leaders of the Secular Franciscans, Regional Spiritual Assistants of the Secular Franciscans, Provincial Ministers and Provincial Spiritual Assistants/Delegates. The meeting proved the catalyst for forming an on-going means of communication and assistance across the lines that usually separate those inspired by Francis of Assisi into membership in a fraternity, Order, or congregation. Questionnaires, gatherings, small group planning, and lots of follow-up

Franciscan Family Forum



work resulted in formation of the Franciscan Family Forum as a means to build relationships and accomplish closer cooperation among the members of the Franciscan 1st, 2nd, 3rd Orders and TOR's in the USA. During 2020, the structure of the Forum developed to include a core group of representatives of each branch of the family. This core group will organize the monthly gatherings and special events, which for the most part will be held by teleconference. A grand "Chapter of Mats" is envisioned for the future.

Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity

We support and maintain membership in a Joint Committee on Franciscan Unity, which meets regularly with representatives from the OFS, Third Order Society of St. Francis, the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, and the Lutheran Franciscan Order. JCFU plans and hosts an annual Conference each year; sharing what we have in common focusing on the elements of Franciscan Unity – (Baptism, Vocation, Charism, Christ centered Spirituality, and prophetic Voice). They held their first "Ecumenical-Interfaith video conference call" this year, which was open to those who are interested and are Ecumenical chairs in their Regions. They communicate with the wider membership through a link on the national website and regular articles in the newsletter TAU-USA.

8. In regard to the last FPV report, what is the status of the recommendations' implementation by the National Council and Minister? For pending matters, please indicate any action plan, specifying implementation times.

We have reviewed and implemented the recommendations from the 2016 Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation. For details see the OFS-USA 2019 annual report to CIOFS.

9. Did you experience grave problems in your National Fraternity? If so, please give a short description. In what way do you think CIOFS could help?

Our National Fraternity certainly experiences challenges, but we are not faced with grave problems.

9.1 Challenge: Declining Number of Spiritual Assistants

A long-term challenge, intrinsic to our times, is providing each local fraternity with a Spiritual Assistant in the face of declining numbers of vowed religious in the 1st, 2nd and TOR Orders.

Progress: In 2019, we set a goal to strengthen our bond with the friars. A big step forward was a national gathering in August 2019. Our national OFS leadership gathered with a number of Provincial Ministers, their delegates to the OFS and Regional Spiritual Assistants for an event, entitled "Life Giving Union – Discussion and Discernment." Fifty-five Franciscans participated. This successful event was facilitated by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants. It provided an unprecedented opportunity for us to build relationship and share our common concerns. We listened and learned. Doors were opened. Invitations were extended. Ideas were shared. It was a graced time. Together we discovered new ways to go forward. We are implementing these ideas which will help maintain and strengthen the bond between the Friars and the OFS.

9.2 Challenge: Multicultural Inclusivity

We are a national fraternity with a variety of preferred languages.

Progress: (1) Beginning in 2019, quarterly teleconferences for Spanish-speaking formators and Spiritual Assistants are being hosted by our Multicultural Councilor and Formation Commission Chair, both fluent in Spanish. (2) Funds are set aside to publish translations of formation material and the national newsletter. (3) A valuable experience at our Chapter was provided by International Councilor Willie (Awilda) Guadalupe. Willie gave her report in Spanish to a mostly English-speaking audience to help us experience what it is like to participate in a meeting where the language spoken is not your own. Those not knowing Spanish quickly realized what it is like to be “the other.” A discussion on inclusivity followed.

9.3 Challenge: Unity within the Order

The polarization in our culture is sadly reflected in a small number of our fraternities, causing partisanship and disunity.

Progress: Through our JPIC Visioning we are finding ways to dispel misconceptions about our OFS mission in the world, by focusing on Catholic Social Teaching, awareness of bias, unity within diversity, and acceptance of diverse ways to deal social justice issues. Our formation resources on “Fraternity Life” (our national priority) and our national theme for 2020, “*Journey Together in Love and Compassion*” also build unity.

9.4 Challenge: Irregular Marriages, Gender Issues

Local fraternity councils have difficulty in responding to those who wish to join the OFS, but who are not in good standing in the Church. Local fraternity councils also struggle to confront professed OFS who have entered irregular marriages, or who are dealing with transgender issues.

Progress: At our 2019 Chapter, the Friars of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants facilitated a special session on “Pastoral Approaches to Difficult Subjects.” The CNSA has developed a guideline to help councils respond to these requests in a way that is compassionate while holding to the teachings of the Catholic Church on these issues. This guideline is posted on our OFS-USA website.

What can CIOFS do to help?

We are open to suggestions and appreciate your prayers.

10. What are the strong points of your National Fraternity?

The brothers and sisters of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order – USA are tremendously grateful for the many blessings and gifts we have been given. The entire National Fraternity is a hard-working and supportive whole, with many strengths. The National Executive Council (NEC) works well together. Our talents are varied, and we find that each of us on the Council offers these talents joyfully and generously. There is a willingness to ask ourselves if we are meeting the needs of the brothers and sisters. We have set goals and are working to meet them. We listen to each other, respect each other, and are flexible in serving the Order. Our many very talented and willing servant leaders give generously of their time, and we have the means to provide many material resources for our National OFS-USA Family. Many of our members have access to current technology that enhances our communication efforts.

11. What else do you think is important to mention about the National Fraternity in the last year?

11.1 OFS-USA Transfer Form

In October 2019, the National Fraternity approved a much needed OFS-USA Transfer Form which standardizes the process for transferring between fraternities, whether those occur within a Region or between Regions. (This form is posted on our website.)

11.2 Translation of “Ritual for the Secular Franciscan Order” and “Essential Documents”

Copyright permission has been granted for a Spanish translation of “Ritual for the Secular Franciscan Order” (Copyright 1985, St. Anthony Messenger Press.) That translation is completed and under review. The publication is slated for early 2021. A Spanish translation of “Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order” (copyright 2005 by the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, USA) has also been completed and is under review. Publication is slated for late 2020 / early 2021.

11.3 Interactive Map on Website

A major achievement is the interactive map on our website showing the location of every local fraternity in the United States. This is a great aid to those seeking the location of the nearest fraternity.

12. If you have special plans for the present or the next year, please give a short description.

12.1 Revision of OFS-USA Statutes

At the 2019 Chapter the National Fraternity discussed the need to revise our National Statutes and set up a working group. The working group planned to have a draft ready for discussion at the 2020 Chapter in October. In light of the current revision of CIOFS Statutes, the timeline for this project has been delayed. The National Fraternity, and in particular the National Executive Council, has spent much time discussing the content of revised International Statutes. We will submit our compiled comments very soon. We look forward to seeing your next draft.

12.2 Spiritual Assistant Handbook

The CNSA, in collaboration with the NEC, is working on a revision of the Spiritual Assistant Handbook. The information in the current handbook that deals with the process of canonical establishment and deactivation of local fraternities, will also be included in our National Statutes.

12.3 National Gathering of Regional Formation Directors

In 2019 our annual national gathering of Regional Formation Directors was replaced with the Formation Visioning workshop. The 2020 gathering of RFD’s was held by teleconference, due to the pandemic. It was a great success. Fr. Christopher Panagoplos TOR, CNSA President-in-turn, gave the keynote address, stressing the importance of initial formation. He reminded the formators that “we are formed in fraternity. We bring the outside in... It is the ‘privileged place.’” The National Formation Team gave an update on the new formation program, providing a sneak preview of a draft of the components of the new formation program: the first draft of the First Steps brochure, an outline of what the chapters would include, a sample chapter in full color and its companion guide. During the afternoon session, the formators learned “How to Talk Like a Franciscan.” The session guided the formators through listening, mediation and conflict resolution techniques á la Francis. The day ended with the Formation

Team participating in a Panel Discussion where they addressed numerous issues, including ideas and resources for on-going formation, virtual formation, formation team building, handling difficult situations, discernment, and the role and need for well-formed Spiritual Assistants in formation.

12.4 Preparations for 2021 Quinquennial Congress

Our Quinquennial (“Q”) Congress Committee has been working since 2017 to prepare for the 2021 OFS-USA National Congress, known as “the Quinquennial” or “Q.” Due to the pandemic, it will not be held in 2021, as planned. We are working with the venue to set a new date for either 2022 or 2023. In spite of the delay, we still intend at this next “Q” to celebrate the 800th anniversary of *Memoriale Propositi* and the 100th year anniversary of the first Quinquennial Congress held in the United States. Our theme is JUBILEE.

12.5 The *Instrumentum Laboris* for the XVI General Chapter and VII Elective Chapter 2021

In September 2020, the NEC received the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the 2021 General Chapter from the Presidency. We were immediately struck by the title “*Animate and Guide with Servant Leadership*” and by this line on the first page: “*It should be noted... that in order to achieve our goals, we must deepen our sense of co-responsibility...*”

We were delighted to see how the Holy Spirit is at work in our Order. This 18-page document sets us forth on a common path. Servant Leadership and co-responsibility truly is the answer to how to support new structures and move our Order forward. This is surely the next step on the trajectory set by the Holy Spirit. We joyfully confirm your work and direction.

Be assured that our OFS-USA National Fraternity will undertake a serious study of this document. May it bear much fruit for all of us in the coming year.

In conclusion, we appreciate the support the Presidency provides. We hold you in prayer and thank God for your dedication and love of our Order. May God bless you and keep you!

Peace and all good!

Approved by National Executive Council

Place and date

St. Louis, Missouri, USA

October 21, 2020

Signature

Jan Parker, ofs

Jan Parker, OFS

National Minister OFS-USA

To be signed by the National Minister after approval by the National Council.