

May, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

It was wonderful to see so many of you at Convivenza! Our “family gathering” is always a highly anticipated and nourishing time for us as Secular Franciscans of Our Lady of the Angels Region. Thank you for making the effort to be present to your brothers and sisters.

This year during the months of May and June, many of your fraternities will be having a Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation. We already have twelve scheduled for this spring alone!

Those of you who have been Secular Franciscans for many years will have experienced a visitation or two, perhaps many more than two. Our newer members, however, might not have experienced this aspect of fraternity life. In any case, we all (myself included) can use a good review of the basics once in a while, so--

DID YOU KNOW...

**...That the earliest Rules of our order, right up to the advent of the Rule of 1978 and the Constitutions of 1990 (updated in 2000 and 2001), required that the visitor be a friar alone?** (You can read about this in the *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance—updated in 2012*)

**...That our present day Rule in Article 26 and our Constitutions in Articles 92 and 94 give us important insight into the Fraternal and Pastoral Visit?**

- “The purpose of both the *pastoral and fraternal* visits is to *revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.*” (Constitutions: Article 92-1)
- “*The fraternal visit is a moment of communion, an expression of the service and concrete interest of the secular leaders at the various levels, so that the fraternity may grow and be faithful to its vocation.*” (Article 94-1)
- “*Among the various initiatives to achieve the purpose of the visit, the visitor will give special attention:*
  - to the *validity of the formation, both initial and permanent;*
  - to the *relations entertained with other fraternities at the different levels, with Franciscan youth, and with the entire Franciscan family.*
  - to the *observance of the directives and of the guidelines of the International Council of the SFO and of the other councils;*
  - to the *presence in the local Church.*” (Article 94-2)
- “*The visitor will (also) check the report of the previous audit or verification of the financial and property management of the Council, the register of the accounts and every document pertaining to the property of the fraternity...*” (Article 94-3)

**...That one of the duties of the fraternity minister at each level is “to request, with the consent of the council, the pastoral and fraternal visits, at least once every three years.”?** (Article 51-2) [The minister at each level makes the request to the council of the higher level.] We suggest that this request be made **every three years, 18 months after a new council is elected.** If we don’t hear from your minister, we will contact him or her. We like to keep everyone up to date! (By the way, Ministers can request visits at other times if, in collaboration with the council, it is deemed necessary.)

**...That your fraternity minister and council prepare ahead of time for the visitation?** We ask that the Minister and Council collaborate on filling out a Pre-visitation Questionnaire to be returned to me at least three weeks before the visitation. The questionnaire asks about everything mentioned above in Articles 94-2 and 3. We also send a check-list to help the Minister and Council know what to have ready for us. (You can read all of these forms on our region website on the Resources page, second column, half-way down: [http://olangels.tripod.com/region\\_links.html](http://olangels.tripod.com/region_links.html) )

**...That the visitors** (Brother Doug and I—or on some occasions my delegate) **will meet with your Council before we meet with the entire fraternity?** At that time we look at and sign the fraternity records, talk about the formation program and ask if the council would like us to help out with any aspect of your fraternity life. Very often, Vice Minister Nancy Conroy or one of the other councilors will accompany me. Brother Doug will also make special time to meet with your Spiritual Assistant.

**...That after we meet with the council, we meet with the entire fraternity?** First, we will pray together. Our Ritual has special prayers for the Fraternal and Pastoral visit on page 50. You can pray and meditate on these ahead of time if you wish. Then we will have a little time for some ongoing formation. Last, BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST, it will be your turn to ask questions, express concerns and make any comments you would like us to take back to the Region Executive Council.

**...That your Minister and Council will receive a written report from me and Brother Doug with commendations, comments and suggestions for your fraternity?** Ask to see it about two weeks after the visit!

**...That we look forward to our visits with local fraternities because you are our brothers and sisters and we love getting to know you better?** Although we see many of you at Convivenza, the Chapter of Ministers, our retreat and at some of the Cluster gatherings, the visitation provides us with additional time to be with you in fraternity. We hope that you will find the Fraternal and Pastoral visit to be an uplifting time in your lives as Secular Franciscans!

Please know that I think of you often and pray for you every day. Please keep me and your Region Executive Council in your prayers.

Many blessings to you,

Diane

Diane F. Menditto, OFS  
Minister, Our Lady of the Angels Region