

VOX FRANCISCANA

Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis



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CHAPTER A FOCUS ON OUR FUTURE

The 2017 General Chapter will be looking at the future of the Order, and its role in the world, based on input from Secular Franciscans around the world.

“We had tremendous response to surveys we asked national fraternities to conduct,” reports Vice Minister General Chelito Núñez. From those surveys the Presidency prepared a “conclusive document.”

“We’re asking national fraternities to review and study this document, and be prepared to discuss and take action on it at the chapter.”

The triennial chapter will be held in Rome, Italy, Nov. 4-11 at the Seraphicum.



2017 General Chapter, 4-11 November, Rome, Italy
**“AS YOU SENT ME INTO THE WORLD,
I HAVE SENT THEM INTO THE WORLD.” (John, 17:18)**
Animating and Guiding the OFS in the World Today

The 2017 General Chapter will be held 4-11 November at the Seraphicum in Rome -- the Pontifical Theological University of Saint Bonaventure.

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YOUFRA 2017



ABOVE AND BELOW: *Some of the YouFra participants at the gathering in Guatemala.*

The YouFra Gathering of Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean -- held January 5-8, 2017 in Guatemala -- attracted 63 YouFra members from five national YouFra fraternities (Guatemala, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica), Franciscan Youth Councilor Andrea Odak, OFS, reports.

The Congress' theme was "YOU-FRA Against the Tide."

The following topics were presented by spiritual assistants and members of the OFS:

- Challenges contained in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and the question: "What does the Pope ask of us as young Catholics?" (Fr. Jeronimo Diaz, OFM Cap and Fr. Marvin Mengares, OFM Cap.).

- "YouFra Against the Tide," that is, the calling as Christians to go against the ways that threaten human dignity (Fr. Marcos Quesada, OFM Conv).

- JPIC Commission – the care of our common home, as presented in the encyclical *Laudato Si*. (Brenda Peralta, OFS and Claudia Noj Nij, OFS).



CIOFS PRESIDENCY

A MACROCOSM OF FRATERNITY LIFE

The operation of the International Presidency (CIOFS) is a macrocosm of what happens on lower fraternity levels – even the local fraternity – but with a global view.

There are some unique challenges.

To get together, they travel from far-flung spots on the globe (with passports and often visas).

Some members greet with kisses on both cheeks, some with a kiss on one cheek, and some with a handshake or hug.

But in the end, the bonds of friendship, of fraternity, cross continents and cultures.

Members communicate in multiple languages. Around the meeting room, one councilor starts speaking in English and another answers in Italian or Spanish. The equipment used by simultaneous interpreters sometimes falters, leaving bewildered looks on some faces.

Plus, all documents and announcements from the Presidency must first be translated into four official languages before being released – all by volunteer translators. Sometimes time can slow efficient communication.

Some may face unusual breakfast-lunch-dinner

cuisine – an adventurous and tasty experience. They make visitations to national fraternities, which may mean crossing the international dateline. (Will their internal clocks ever catch up?)

They also may experience the local political environment – such as when one presidency councilor and a spiritual assistant recently visited a central African nation for its national chapter.

The councilor arrived Friday afternoon, but the immigration office, which must stamp the passport, was closed. His passport was taken so it could be

stamped when the office reopened. He was given a photocopy of the passport. He was taken by car to the chapter and wasn't stopped at checkpoints, but his return journey to the airport was by bus, which was stopped four times. Each time soldiers took him off the bus because he only had a photocopy of his passport. The friar spiritual assistant argued on his behalf, but it wasn't until the friar offered money that the councilor was released, each time.

The friar “was my savior,” the councilor said. “I was very scared.”



CIOFS Presidency members gathered in Rome from March 18 to 25, meeting from morning to night on the business and spirit of the worldwide Secular Franciscan Order.

CIOFS PRESIDENCY

PROPELLED BY PRAYER, FRANCISCAN CHARISM

Putting oneself in the presence of God. In other words, REALLY praying.

That was a focus of a one-day spiritual retreat for members of the CIOFS Presidency before they got down to the business of the Order at their spring meeting in Rome, 18-26 March 2017.

Pray with your whole person, body and spirit, urged Fr. Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.

“Some people find prayer challenging – maybe because they have not learned to simply be in the presence of God,” noted the general spiritual assistant.

Referring to the Rule, he

reminded everyone that “prayer and contemplation” should embody “all they are and do.”

He pointed to a lit candle and a long-stem rose next to him, saying they give their all in producing light and emanating beauty.

The candle is a symbol of the light of the world, of prayer. For the rose to “remain long and beautiful, it must remain on the plant” – like prayer. In other words, “the whole person comes to meet God.” And like a cell phone, God is communicating to us constantly. “When we pray, we have decided to respond to His call.”

Don’t be afraid to “pray with our bodies,” he urged, whether it’s kneeling, genuflecting, being prostrate, lifting arms high, bringing hands together, walking. We can be moved by our body position to let go and really pray, to find a path to communicating with God.

“The big question is, are we willing to always be in the presence of God when we pray... where the whole person participates: body, heart, mind and soul?”

In a sense, it’s creating a sacred place, alone with God, “where you can sing or cry.”

St. Francis often found private spots to pray, he

said, noting that a fresco in the Upper Church of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi portrays Francis praying with arms raised before the San Damiano Cross. He referred to Thomas of Celano’s description of Francis in prayer:

“...when praying in the woods or solitary places he would fill the forest with groans, water the places with tears, strike his breast with his hand, and, as if finding a more secret hiding place, he often conversed out loud with his Lord.”

Father Francis also pointed to the power of making the sign of the cross. “To sign is to renew our baptism... to be a temple of the Lord... to be armed for battle.”

“Lord,” he prayed, “teach us to harmonize our body and spirit” so we can “be fully in the presence of God.”

Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, led the afternoon session, focusing on a theme of conversion.

He referred to the prophets of the Old Testament who called for a “conversion of the heart” and a “turning to God.”

“We live in a society where there are good people but also evil people... We



Capuchin Friar Francis Bongajum Dor led the morning session of the spiritual retreat.

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each have a responsibility.”

For the prophets, “to repent means to go back to the Lord.” With Jesus, it’s also “accepting Him.”

“Our faith is a gift... opening us to the Kingdom of God.”

He pointed to Paul’s conversion – from being the pursuer of Christ’s followers to being pursued by God himself; and to Peter’s weakness and returning resolve. “There’s more joy in heaven for one who repents than for one with no need of repentance.”

The testament of St. Francis “is important,” he said. “Do penance... Be merciful.” As with him embracing the leper: “When I showed mercy to them, they were sweet to me.” Entering into the suffering of the world “transforms his heart.”



Friar Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, led the afternoon session of the spiritual retreat.

He suggested that everyone should visit a fraternity that serves the poor – not for the publicity, but for the experience. “The fruits of

conversion are the works of charity.”

The OFS Rule mentions conversion – “a renewal journey... a continuing

renewal journey of conversion... a personal and communal journey.”

And the “renewal of the church starts here.”

WE BELONG!

We belong! Yes. It’s true! As Secular Franciscans we are a part of a world order under the direct oversight of the Pope. As close as St. Francis was to the Pope, so are we. This is joyful news, but it also calls us to action, to embrace our family, to learn about the Order, to take our responsibilities seriously – to ourselves and our goal to reach heaven, to our OFS brothers and sisters at home and across the globe, to our families, to our Church, to our world community and to our sister Earth. It sounds like a major responsibility, but our rule gives us simple, manageable guidelines, taking us from where we are today to where we could be tomorrow – little steps ... one day at a time ... as the rule says, daily conversion.

We need not feel overburdened by the rule. Remem-

ber, God will give us all the tools necessary to accomplish today’s goals. We just need to open up to Him and allow Him to work in us. Let us take that little step in conversion today, by reading the rule and asking ourselves, “how can I live the rule today?” Can we pray with our children or spouse? Can we care for that little piece of Earth we call home? Can we assist our neighbors who are sick or in need? And, what about the needs of the Church? The rule is our roadmap. Let us grow together by using it as our guide.

Through our profession, we belong. And, once we belong, we become one with our OFS brothers and sisters. We are one in spirit ... one in love ... one in the mission ... one in action.

CIOFS WELCOMES FR. PEDRO NEW OFM GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

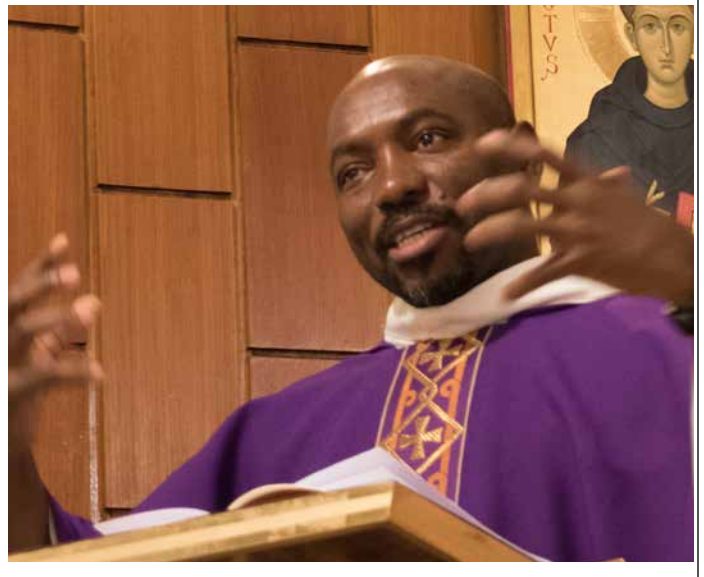
The Presidency welcomed a new general spiritual assistant – Fr. Pedro Zitha, OFM.

“I’m glad to be part of this family,” Father Pedro noted.

“I’m from South Africa, although I was born in Mozambique.” He said he was privileged to be able to

speaking two major languages, Portuguese and English. “Italian is a little more of a challenge.” He also speaks Zulu.

He has been a friar almost 17 years, and a priest for nearly a decade. He is the second oldest of six siblings (three boys and three girls).



Participants in the JPIC and YouFra animators workshop held last November in Lusaka, Zambia.

AFRICA PROJECT: FORMATION, JPIC, CONGRESS

AFRICA – With the success of the 2016 English-speaking formation workshop held in Zambia, the Africa Project team is planning French-speaking workshops in the Ivory Coast (14-17 June 2017) and Cameroon (2-5 August 2017). Fraternities in 18 African countries are

being invited.

ANOTHER Africa Project endeavor, a **JPIC and YouFra animators workshop**, attracted participants from four countries in November 2016 – Zambia, Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa. This was conducted with the assistance of Franciscans

International.

Held in Lusaka, Zambia, participants shared challenges from their regions, such as poverty, relocation of homes due to mining, defending the sanctity of life, rights of widows, plight of youth, and political issues.

THEY ARE also plan-

ning a week-long **Pan African Congress** in 2018, probably in Pretoria, South Africa, that would feature sessions on vocations, JPIC, YouFra, social issues, spiritual assistance, with opportunities for work group discussions and feedback.

OFS AROUND THE GLOBE

NEWS, MEETINGS AND CHAPTERS

Caracas Fraternity Feeds Children

VENEZUELA – “You don’t know what this has meant for these kids.”

That’s how Vice Minister General María Consuelo (Chelito) Núñez described the impact of the feeding program that La Chiquinquirá Fraternity recently started at Don Bosco preschool in Caracas.

“Now kids don’t miss school ever.”

The fraternity, with donations from Secular Franciscans around the world, provides breakfast and a mid-day snack to 130 children, many from



impoverished families. “Many don’t have an evening meal,” Chelito noted. The fraternity is

overcoming a double challenge – not only feeding hungry children, but also acquiring basic foodstuff

that is in short supply in local markets.

Papua New Guinea National Chapter

Presidency Councilor Augustine Young, OFS, described the national elective chapter of Papua New Guinea as a time “of family, of prayer, of fraternity, and of service and hospitality.” It was truly a “spirit of family,” he noted. “I felt at home even though the environment was so different from my own.”

Held 1-6 November 2016 at St. Michael Parish in Lae City, the chapter elected Erwin Maritua, OFS, as national minister; Sabina Masiri, OFS, as



Papua New Guinea National Council officers take a “selfie” with Presidency Councilor Augustine Young. From left: Augustine, Vice Minister Paul Biar, OFS; Secretary Alice Yeni, OFS; Formator Maria Gorethy Mium, OFS; Treasurer Joel Masiri, OFS, and International Councilor Sabina Masiri, OFS.

international councilor, and Joel Masiri, OFS, as international councilor substitute. Fr. Joe Quen-

taip, OFM, was the delegate of the Conference of Spiritual Assistants. Some 20 capitulars and

13 observers participated. Also present the National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Edward Meli, OFM.

France Re-elects National Council

France's entire national council was re-elected during its National Chapter held 8-9 October 2016 in Bernay-en-Champagne.

Chantal Avrai, OFS, continues as minister and international councilor, and Claire Déchenaux, OFS, as vice-minister and international councilor substitute.

Attending were delegates from 22 regions, together with eight regional spiritual assistants and some observers.

Presidency Councilor Attilio Galimberti, OFS,



National Formator Bernard Mergaux, OFS; National Minister Chantal Avrai, OFS, and Vice Minister Claire Déchenaux, OFS.

presided, along with Fr. Eric Bidot, OFM Cap., provincial minister of France, who was delegated

by the Conference of Spiritual Assistants (CAS).

“All the Chapter work was done in a typical

Franciscan climate of joy, of simplicity and of fraternity,” noted Attilio.

Fraternal/Pastoral Visit to USA

If there were a moment that reflected the spirit of the USA National Chapter, perhaps it was when attendees were lifting their arms and swaying as General Spiritual Assistant Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., called:

“Be happy in the Lord, rejoice and be glad.”

The friar liked to sing and sway, almost dance, when both celebrating the liturgy and addressing the chapter, held 31 October to 6 November 2016 at San Pedro Retreat Center near Orlando, Florida.

He hails from Cameroon, where, he once said, “we like to sing and dance to



General Spiritual Assistant Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.; Vice Minister General Chelito Nuñez, OFS, National Minister Jan Parker, OFS, and Orlando Bishop John Noonan.

everything.”

The fraternal visitor, Vice Minister General Chelito Nuñez, OFS, noted that the national fraternity's demographics show the U.S. has 12,224 professed members and 1076

candidates spread among 30 regional fraternities and 625 local fraternities (131 of which are without local spiritual assistants). Regional ministers and delegates from all 30 regions were present, along

with representatives from Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Orlando Bishop John Gerard Noonan presided at the opening Mass, providing an opportunity for the visitors to discuss the OFS with the prelate.

Egypt Focusing On Charism

EGYPT – The national council is planning a national chapter in Alexandria July 30 to Aug. 4, and is focused on reanimating the OFS charism in preparation for it, report National Minister Shehata Habib and National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Nabil Aziz, OFM. The chapter theme of “Let’s begin, brothers” “reflects our desire to rebuild and reinforce the OFS,” they reported. They’re launching a new formation program based on the OFS Rule, with the following main topics: nature and requirements of the Franciscan vocation, meaning of Profession; living the Franciscan charism as seculars. The Egyptian national council also plans to revive its magazine, Fraternity and Peace, which has been defunct for three years.

Croatia National Elective Chapter

The Croatia National Elective Chapter featured a talk by Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, on practical applications of operating an order and fraternity.

Some 51 brothers and sisters took part in the chapter, held 7-9 October 2016 at Samobor Francis-

can Centre in Samobor.

Branka Černugelj, OFS, was elected national minister; Vladimir Rosančić, OFS, was elected international councilor, and Samanta Jadreško, OFS, international councilor substitute.

Fr. José Antonio Cruz Duarte OFM, general spiritual assistant, offered a reflection on “Living mercy in fraternity.”

Council Named At India Chapter

The National Chapter of India was held 27-29 October 2016, in the retreat house of the Capuchins in Kotagiri, in the district of Nilgiri, Ooty, Tamil Nadu.

Some 80 persons attended including capitulars, 15 spiritual assistants, 10 observers and other invitees, in addition to Presidency Councilor Augustine Yoon, OFS, and General Spiritual Assistant Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR. Present for the opening of the Chapter was Dr. A. Amalraj, bishop of the Diocese of Ootacamund, along with a Capuchin provincial minister and vice-provincial minister.

In the afternoon of the second day, there was a visit to the Botanical garden and to the novitiate of the OFM Conv.

Since the necessary conditions for an elective chapter were not met,

Augustine nominated a minister and a provisional national council with the task of organizing an elective chapter within a year. Both Augustine and Fr. Amando said they were “grateful for the help” provided by two national spiritual assistants, Fr. Saviour Karamveril, OFM Conv, president in turn of their conference, and Fr. Marion Pulichamakil, TOR, and for the hospitality of the TOR and OFM Conv. friars.

Tanzania National Elective Chapter

The Tanzania National Chapter, held 26-30 October 2016, saw Lucia Nambua, OFS, elected as national minister, and Felix Mosha, OFS, as international councilor.

Presidency Councilor Michel Janian, OFS, presided, and Br. Felician Kavishe, OFM Cap., was delegate for the CAS.

The chapter was at the San Damiano Convent of the Capuchin Friars in Msimbazi – Dar es Salaam.

Fraternal/Pastoral Visit to Canada

Minister General Tibor Kauser, OFS, and General Spiritual Assistant Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap., conducted a fraternal and pastoral visitation to Canada’s National Fraternity, 27-

28 October at the Spiritual Centre of the Ursulines in Loretteville, Québec. This was immediately followed by a two-day National Spiritual Chapter.

The Canadian National Fraternity, according to its demographic report, is comprised of 12 regions (3 Anglophone and 9 Francophone). Tibor and Father Francis -- accompanied by National Minister Gilles Métivier, OFS, and National Spiritual Assistant André Chicoine, OFM Cap. -- visited the Bishop of Québec, Cardinal Gérard Cyprien Lacroix.

OFM Provincial Minister Fr. Marc Le Goanvec also paid a visit to the capitulars.

Uruguay National Elective Chapter

Uruguay’s National Chapter, held 4-6 November 2016, “was marked by an atmosphere of prayer, work, reflection, dialogue and Franciscan joy,” reports Presidency Councilor Silvia Diana, OFS.

She presided over the election of Fabrizio Martinez Dibarboure, OFS, as national minister, and Raul Giudice, OFS, as national vice-minister. She was assisted by Fr. Dorvalino Fassini, OFM, delegated by the CAS. The friar also spoke on the topic, “Being Secular Franciscan – Our Challenge Today.”

Albania National Elective Chapter

Presidency Councilor Ana Fruk, OFS, noted the atmosphere of “dialogue and Franciscan joy” at Albania’s national elective chapter, held on 12 November 2016 at the Saint Francis of Assisi convent of the OFM, in Scutari. Florinda Sterkai, OFS, was elected national minister and Paulin Ndreka, OFS, national vice-minister. “For the first time,” Ana noted, “an international councilor was elected in the person of Lazer Gega, OFS.” Ana was accompanied by Fr. José Antonio Cruz Duarte, general spiritual assistant.



Delegates and observers attend the Albania chapter.

Some 22 capitulars and 15 other brothers and sisters took part in the chapter, along with National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Vladimir Mamala, OFM,

as well as the Custos, Fr. Aurel Gjerka, OFM, who celebrated the installation Mass. “The capitulars were particularly happy for the pastoral visit that was

done just before the chapter,” Ana said. Father José visited four local fraternities in Albania, three of which are constituted and one is emerging.

Fraternal/Pastoral Visit to Cuba

Fraternal and pastoral visits to the National Fraternity of Cuba in Havana were carried out by Presidency Councilor Ana Maria Raffo Laos, OFS, and by General Spiritual Assistant Fr. Amando Trujillo Cano, TOR, from 24 to 28 November 2016.

The visitors were hosted by the Capuchin Friars at the convent-church of “Cristo de Limpias” in the old Havana quarter. Most of the meetings were held at the Church of Saint Francis in the historical center of the city, managed by the OFM Conv. Friars. The visitors held



Secular Franciscans and visitors meet with the Havana archbishop.

various meetings with the minister and councilors along with representatives of some local fraternities, and two delegates of the major superiors, Fr. Frank Miki, OFM, and Fr. Silvano

Castelli, OFM Conv. The program also included a visit to Havana Archbishop Juan de la Caridad Garcia, and another to the Apostolic Nuncio Giorgio Lingua.

Ana Maria and Father Amando said they were “very grateful for the fraternal hospitality of the Secular Franciscans and of the Friars” who hosted and assisted them.



The National Fraternity of Kenya celebrated its National Elective Chapter on 9-11 December 2016. Patrick Macharia was reelected as the national minister and Jacinta Kingori was elected as international councilor.

Steady Growth In Ethiopia

ETHIOPIA – A steady spurt of growth in Secular Franciscan vocations highlights news coming out of Ethiopia, thanks in large part to Fr. Mathewos Ajabo Adadde, OFM Cap. The friar has been assigned to OFS since 2012, and has been helping with formation ever since.

In 2016, 23 made their temporary profession, and another group of 28 candidates were making a temporary profession in Kanafa on March 26, 2017, and another 31 were ready for candidacy, Presidency Councillor Jenny Harrington reports.

Lebanon National Elective Chapter

LEBANON -- Some 129 electors participated in the Lebanon National Elective Chapter, held 19-20 November 2016 at the Centre “Maison Saint François” in Kbannaya – Jal el Dib. Participants also included some observers and three national spiritual assistants (including out-going National Spiritual Assistant Fr. Nidal, OFM Cap.; the national spiritual assistant for the YouFra, Fr. Raymond; and the major superior of the Capuchin Friars in the Near East, Fr. Tanios Rizk).

Presidency Councilor

Attilio Galimberty, OFS, presided over the election of Joseph El Turk, OFS, as national minister; Marise Chami, OFS, as international councilor, and Gina Chedid, OFS, international councilor substitute. Attilio was assisted by General Spiritual Assistant Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.

In the morning of the 19th, the visitors and some members of the national council paid a visit to the Apostolic Vicar of the Latin Rite, Mgr. Cesare Esseyan, OFM Conv. This was followed by the opening Mass presided over by Fr. Tony Chekri, OFM. Mgr. Cesare Esseyan presided over the closing Mass.

Nigerian National Elective Chapter

The emerging National Fraternity of Nigeria has 115 professed members and seven canonically established local fraternities. Spiritual and pastoral assistance is provided solely by Capuchin Friars. This third National Elective Chapter was held in Olunde-Ibandan on 25-26 November 2016. Participants included 15 electors, many observers and three spiritual assistants. The Chapter was presided over by Genesi Ngwainbi, OFS, national minister of Cameroon. He was assisted by General Spiritual Assistant Francis Bongajum Dor, OFM Cap.

DEAF FRATERNITY

'WE'RE ALWAYS SERVING OTHERS'

By *BOB STRONACH, OFS*

Jandi Arboleda was “speaking” rapidly, his hands and fingers almost a blur.

He was signing for members of St. Francis of Assisi Fraternity – possibly the only deaf fraternity in the Order.

Minister Janet Noyes, OFS, and her Secular Franciscan husband, Peter, were “listening” attentively as the interpreter related what the speakers were saying during the 2016 annual chapter of St. Margaret of Cortona Region, held Nov. 12, 2016 at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church in Crofton, Maryland, USA.

With nine active members, the fraternity ministers to the deaf community, Peter noted during a break in the proceedings.

The fraternity meets at the Center for Deaf Ministry in Landover Hills, Maryland, where they attract up to 40 people for Sunday Mass.

“It’s like family, the whole community is like family,” said Peter, former local minister and current regional treasurer. In fact, Janet is teaching sign language to Franciscan friars.



Jandi Arboleda signs for deaf Secular Franciscans.



Deaf fraternity leaders Peter and Janet Noyes.

The Franciscan charism attracted the deaf members, Peter noted, because

“it’s simple,” because of its “prayer life,” because “of community,” and “because

we’re always serving other people, we’re always servants.”