

**Listen, Discern, Go Forth**

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**BSSF**

**Regional Minister**

Minister's Message from the Summer 8689 issue of the Communio

**My Dear Sisters and Brothers,**

**May the Lord grant you his peace!**

**I'm genuinely joy-filled!**

**Your Regional Executive Council (REC) has been in office for one year, living article 21 of our Rule, "each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister who are elected." It's hard to believe it's been a year.**

**The year culminated with our Annual Regional Gathering at Ridgecrest Conference Center, Aug. 11-13. This council's first ARG required extensive planning and preparation.**

**On the first evening, I discussed some of the highlights of this past year. I thought I would share them here for those who couldn't attend.**

- **Established St. Padre Pio Newly Forming Group, Lancaster, SC, being sponsored by St Clare, Aiken, SC. They will profess seven candidates Sept 30, 2023**
- **In the Region: 34 newly professed**
- **6 new councils**
- **Commissioned four new Spiritual Assistants**
  - **The REC has had two in-person Council meetings, strengthening relationships to better serve you. We also had three Zoom meetings with the Regional Fraternity Council (RFC), all the ministers. These were helpful in sharing information, making timely decisions, and getting to know each other better.**
  - **An action item from last year's RFC meeting was to reduce our reserve funds. From our reserve funds, we donated \$16,000 to Catholic Charities in the eight dioceses from which we come. This serves to strengthen our**

**relationships with the wider church and donate to the many ministries you serve. Article 6 of our Rule.**

- **Also, from our reserve funds, we have set aside \$5,000 for joint fraternity activities, such as retreats and celebrations of Transitus. Be creative with your ideas.**
- **The REC has also experienced change. Deacon Tom Shaver, OFS, our Regional Spiritual Assistant, and Carolyn Townes, OFS, our JPIC animator, have both stepped down. We are grateful for their many years of service. Change is always a challenge and an opportunity for others to consider those roles and how they may be being called to a significant servant leader role. (See the JPIC animator application on page 6 of this issue.)**
- **I was able to visit several fraternities and attend their gatherings. I also attended the profession of three members at St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Augusta, Georgia. I'm looking forward to seeing more of you this year and participating in your fraternity life.**

**Also taking place in August was the National Chapter, held at the Pallottine Renewal Center, in St Louis, Mo. This was a visitation year with Dina Shabalina, OFS from the Ukraine. Pastoral visitor Fr. Carlos, OFM from Peru., along with an attendance of ~80 sisters and brothers from across the country. As with any Gathering of Franciscans there were meetings, prayer, celebration of the Eucharist and social time with lots of hugs, food and laughter. One highlight was the celebration of the Eucharist at the Cathedral Basilica of St Louis, on August 25th, his feast day. Along with St. Elizabeth of Hungary, he is our patron saint.**

**There was time for open dialogue with our visitors and the National Executive Council. I'm pleased to let you know, National Minister Jane DeRose-Bamman, OFS, has formed a task force on racism. The purpose is to go beyond a statement against racism and provide materials for our fraternities to encourage open dialogue. Dialogue and daily conversion so that we love our sisters and brothers as ourselves, as the Lord has taught us.**

**Fraternal visitor Dina closed with "live the golden rule, Gospel to life and life to Gospel."**

**Pastoral visitor Fr. Carlos closed with "use not only logic and reason to address our challenges, use faith."**

**As I reflect on our theme, I believe we listened this year to several requests; help ARG be more inviting and accessible and reduce our reserve funds. We discerned what options and possibilities we had. We went forth with 200+ in attendance at ARG, more accessibility with the golf cart and relationship building with our smaller breakout groups and apostolate. We went forth and distributed \$16,000 to our bishops and have allocated \$5,000 to be used by our fraternities.**

**I look forward to the opportunities to love and serve you in the coming years. May the Lord bless you all with peace and joy.**

**Ellen**