

Update from National Minister for all members of OFSGB, Lent 2017.

Dear All

Peace and all Good.

THE BARTON PROJECT

Good news is always welcome and I was very encouraged by the response we received from the Definitory Council of the OFM Conventual when I reported on our first year's experience at our national seat, All Saints, Barton. and asked for a guarantee that we could use the space another year, although I know the custody has its custodial chapter this Autumn and this is where decisions are generally taken.

I received a very appreciative and supportive reply which included sincere thanks for all the work OFS members have done to clean up the premises and make them usable. *"The OFS has done a wonderful job in working on the building making it useful for the National Offices as well as presentable for its other uses. Thank you so much."* (Fr Peter Damian OFM Conv, Custos). In consideration of our efforts we have been given six months' rent free this year.

However, I would ask you to continue contributing to the Barton Project, if possible I would ask regions to donate as much as they did last year as this will help cover expenses incurred by those who have already committed time and energy to begin national work in Barton.

NEW WORK AT BARTON

In January 2017, a working party come together to finalise the new translation of our Rule that had been ongoing in 2016. This group consisted of volunteers from the national council. The volunteers were not expected to translate but to consider the considerable amendments made in the new translation. This little team worked solidly, everyone who took part experienced a new and wonderful sense of fraternity as we completed the revision. A draft has been sent to CIOFS and we await authorisation after which we can work on the handbook. Similar work will be required when the new translations of the General Constitutions and the Ritual have been completed.

At the national executive meeting, later this month, members will consider using Barton for further small groups, looking at topics that recognised as important for the future of OFSGB today. I will circulate details after the meeting **and I ask every member who is able, to consider offering to serve on any of the agreed working parties. The invitation is to all members not only office holders.**

GIBALTAR CHAPTER (April 21 -24)

The Gibraltar fraternity have worked very hard to prepare this event. I am glad to say that every region will have at least one representation at the chapter. All of us will share in the benefits of this event because it will be an opportunity for renewal and our freshly fuelled enthusiasm will be shared on our return.

OUR CHALLENGING WORLD

I don't need to list the challenges we find living today, they can seem endless and we can feel powerless. However, we certainly pray and we offer practical assistance where and when we can. On the approval and distribution of the General Constitutions in 2001, our Minister General wrote: *"We will certainly be asked to give witness by being coherent and firm in the fulfilment of our baptismal promises, renewed and reaffirmed through profession the OFS"* Emanuela De Nunzio Minister General OFS 2001

I believe it is time for our membership of OFS to become less hidden in all the work we do so we can let others know about OFSGB, our way of life and above all our firm and steadfast faith and hope.

Two recent family bereavements and the death of three members of OFS in our region have given me pause for reflection. I have been revisiting the history of the Order in the new formation resources. When I go back to our history, I am always struck by the great hope various consecutive Popes, who were professed as secular Franciscans, have had for our Order. I regret we have not yet lived up to their hope. Today, I am convinced of the contemporary relevance of the Franciscan mission. Pope Francis has drawn attention to several Franciscan themes. Many fraternities have studied some of the writings of our pope: Laudato Si, the Joy of the Gospel, on mercy and on the family. Yet there may not be much opportunity to share our Franciscan experience and understanding with people around us. As I look around my own and other parishes I wonder how many parishioners and clergy have heard of OFS? Do they know of us, but are not attracted to this vocation? Looking through our archives in Barton I am aware that many members have asked these questions in the recent past. Can we change this now? If not us, who? If not now, when?

One of the topics I propose for team work in Barton is promotion of the Order. This was one of the priorities when we were elected to the national executive council in 2015.

WEBSITE: ofsgb.org

I hope every fraternity now has at least one member who has access to the website and takes responsibility for sharing what is available with their local fraternity. If this is not possible locally, it is a priority that a fraternity asks the region, or a neighbouring fraternity, to do this for them.

One thing I recommend is that every professed member takes time to become familiar with the new initial formation programme. I remind everyone that the period of preparation for profession has been extended. We are awaiting the approval of our new national statutes where the time will be specified. I recommend starting with two modules: Vocation, Mission and Charism and Profession.

NATIONAL EVENTS IN 2017

Gibraltar Chapter in April

A retreat weekend at Pantasaph, 1-3 September "Living Faith in Daily Life", flyer attached

A national formation weekend in Crewe, planned for the end of October – John Power will be circulating details

In the words of St Francis at the end of the Later Admonition and Exhortation, addressed to the secular Franciscans of his day, Let us:

***Give praise. Glory , honour and blessing, to Him
Who suffered so much
Who has given and will give in the future every good,
For He is our power and strength
Who alone is good, who alone is almighty, who alone is omnipotent, wonderful, glorious
And who alone is holy, worthy of praise and blessing through endless ages, Amen.***

Paula ofs.

