

Our Lady of the Angels Regional Fraternity
Chapter of Ministers Meeting Minutes
January 19th 2013
St. Francis of Assisi Church
New York, NY

Attending: Ron Pihokker, Diane Menditto, Kate Asselin, Richard Spana, Nancy Conroy, Mary Frances Reavey, Julia McCants, Sheila Tuohy, Andy Klutkowski, Bro. Doug Soik, OFM cap.

- **Opening Prayer:** Ron and Diane led the opening prayer service.
- **Roll Call:** Kate read the roll; **29 of 39 fraternities were represented** by ministers or their designees, plus approximately 15 additional fraternity members. All members of the Regional Executive Council were present.
- **Welcome:** Regional Minister Ron Pihokker welcomed all to the Chapter meeting and introduced the speaker, **Sister Lillian Alam, FMM** (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary), formerly of Franciscans International and a world authority on human trafficking.
Sr. Lillian's phone number: 917-279-8922
- **On-going Formation:** Sister Lillian presented "**The Tragedy and the Challenge of Human Trafficking**" with two extended slide shows. These slide shows (1.5 hrs.+) and a 100-page handbook can be accessed on the Region website:
www.ourladyoftheangels.org

Sr. Lillian addressed the following questions in her presentation:

- *What is trafficking?* To have control over another person for exploitive purposes; recruitment, transport, and harboring via threat and deception; abuse of power for the purpose of exploitation. Human trafficking is modern day slavery. TIP = Trafficking In Person
- *Who is trafficked?* Marginalized women and children, ethnic minorities, refugees and "illegals," vulnerable people. A key dynamic is that innocent people taken advantage of *feel guilty*.
- *What are the causes?* Socio-cultural and economic: illiteracy, inadequate education and economic opportunities; the erosion of traditional family values; racial discrimination. Also new media and technologies, pornography, male perceptions of women, consumerist behavior, economic disparities, globalization; lucrative business with high returns; the downfall of communist governments in Eastern and Central Europe. *The bottom line is greed.*
- *What factors fuel trafficking?* Poverty; lack of legislation; trafficking is often out of reach of the legal system; it is complex, underground, wide-spread; trafficking

routes are constantly changing, often following migration patterns; barriers to *legal* migration; extensive complicity of corrupt state officials.

- *What are the types of recruitment techniques traffickers use?* “We have job for you.” Force, deception, false offers of marriage, employment, and a better life; direct sale and kidnapping. Traffickers enlist the help of locals to identify vulnerable families;
- *How do they keep people from leaving?* Violence or threats of violence; isolation; cut off from any possible means of assistance or communication (language barriers); drugging, starving, many forms of psychological and physical confinement and mistreatment.
- *Where are people trafficked to?* From country of origin to a border country (transition) and then to destination country. Every country has victims of trafficking. General movement patterns are from east (majority from India, S.E. Asia, Africa) to wealthy countries of the world -- US, Europe, Australia
- *What are people trafficked for?* Prostitution, cleaning, waitressing, entertainment, forced labor, domestic servitude, begging, exploitation for organs, marriage, recruiting for traffickers etc.
- *What do we know about trafficking? Key facts:*
 1. *How many?* There are 27 million slaves in world today
 2. *Legal?* Slavery is not legal anywhere, but happens everywhere
 3. *Cost?* Average cost of a person trafficked is \$90
 4. *Children?* 50% of trafficked persons are children; 1 million children are trafficked annually
 5. *Prostitution?* An estimated 400,000 people trafficked worldwide each year are forced into prostitution
 6. *Workers?* An additional 2.5 million people are exploited as labor
 7. *Who are traffickers?* Men and women; “friends” and relatives
 8. *Industries?* Global garment industry uses trafficked workers/slave labor
 9. *Countries?* Most immigrants are now coming from SE Asia; these are the most vulnerable populations
 10. *Impacts?* International adoptions are at a standstill because of trafficking
- *What can be done about trafficking?*
 1. *UN Protocol:* Implement the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking
 2. *Education:* Prevention and consciousness-raising programs; educate migrant workers before they arrive about laws in destination country
 3. *Training:* Prepare teachers to run school-based anti-trafficking programs
 4. *Penalties:* More effective criminal penalties for traffickers
 5. *Migration:* Improving border security, document verification, etc.
 6. *Reporting:* Creating standardized reporting forms for police

7. *Initiatives*: support common counter-trafficking initiatives between stakeholders in sending and receiving countries
8. *Capacity-building*: Many are tiny, underfunded agencies combatting trafficking
9. *Rescue*: Protect, assist, support, empower and emancipate trafficked persons, including rescuing and voluntary return and reintegration in country of origin; counseling and support to help the survivor overcome the experience and make a new life
10. *Economic Reform*: Reduce the “conditions of vulnerability”; economic reform and living wage initiatives in poor countries
11. *Environmental action*: Destruction of habitats, food and water ecologies makes both people and animals desperate to survive, forces migration, increases vulnerability to trafficking
12. *Law*: Help to draft and pass improved anti-trafficking legislation. (Bad immigration law is stimulating trafficking).

It is possible to end slavery within the next 25 years!

- *What is the mindset of victims in the US?*
They do not speak English; unfamiliar with US culture; distrust outsiders, especially law enforcement; fear of deportation; do not identify themselves as victims; self-blame; current situation may actually be better than where they came from; unaware of rights; and fear for families in home countries (often threatened by traffickers).
- *What are some common myths about trafficking?*
 - All prostitutes are willing
 - All immigrants smuggled are willing
 - Human trafficking is a crime prosecuted only at the Federal level
 - All participants in human trafficking are criminals
- *What help do victims need most?*
 - Immediate assistance with housing, food, medical attention, etc.
 - Mental health counseling; trauma recovery
 - Income assistance: cash, living allowances
 - Legal help with immigration status; visa
- *How can we identify victims? Key questions:*
 - How did you get here?
 - Where do you live?
 - Do you owe someone money?
 - Where are (or is someone keeping) your legal travel documents?
 - Were you threatened if you leave?
 - Has your family been threatened?
 - Were you ever physically abused?
 - Were you ever forced to stay in one place?
 - Who are you afraid of?

- *Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA)* (A comprehensive law that went into effect in 2000.)
 - *Goals:* To prevent trafficking from overseas, increase prosecution, protect victims and provide Federal and state assistance.
 - *Challenges:* Immigration reform is critical to combating human trafficking; detention centers are big money-making operations for private corporations.

See President Obama's statement on human trafficking 9-25-12

- *Super Bowl 2014: Combating human trafficking.*
UN is asking big hotels to sign agreement not to allow children in hotels. Best thing to do: go to the media! Traffickers are prosecuted in Federal Court. Victims go to immigration court. Pro bono lawyers are key; to be effective they need to be connected and know the system. Religious communities are stepping up to provide safe harbors, shelter for victims.

Fr. Felix celebrated a noon Mass for the assembled ministers.

- **Approval of Minutes of Chapter 2011:** A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes from the November 20, 2011 Chapter of Ministers, which were approved as is.
- **Region Executive Council Reports**
 - *Minister Ron Pihokker*
 - *Aging OFS:* Numbers of both professed, candidates, inquirers, as well as the number of fraternities continue to decline. Less than than 1% of the membership is under age 35; 56% are 66 or older.
 - *Youfra:* We need new life! Young people are looking for a faith-based community with good people who are trying to improve the world. New Youth program being developed with FAN: Franciscan Earth Corps has great potential.
 - *2012 "Q":* More than 600 people attended. Sr. Ilio Delio and Bro. Bill Short were keynote speakers. DVDs of the presentations are now available and well worth sharing with local fraternities.
 - *FUN Manual:* This resource for on-going formation is available in both English and Spanish. (See website www.ourladyoftheangels.org). Our Region has been rolling this out at cluster meetings throughout the year.
 - *Region Retreat:* Scheduled for August 2--4 at Mt. Alvernia, the Franciscan Retreat Center, in Wappinger Falls, NY. The speaker will be Fr. Jean Pistascio; from Holy Name Province.
 - *Future Directions:* "Evangelizing the evangelizers" creating faith-based joyful loving fraternities.
 - *Region Priorities:* Formation, communication, and providing spiritual assistants; outreach; vocations; youth.
 - *Spiritual Assistant – Bro. Doug Soik, OFM cap.*
 - *Healthy spirituality leads to action.* How do I respond after intimacy in prayer? What does God want me and my fraternity to do? Some form of outreach is imperative; it is part of being Franciscan.

- *The Church calls us to evangelize.* We have to start with ourselves. Have we lost the gift of inviting? If every professed member brought one new person to fraternity, our numbers would double. We need to spread the word about how precious gift it is to be a Franciscan.
 - *Be ready to witness!* Wear the Tau cross. Show the joy! Share your vocation; don't let it die—the world needs us more than ever!
 - *Strengths and weaknesses:* The secular Franciscans stopped the wars in medieval Europe! We need someone who really understands evangelization to teach us and help us to overcome this weakness, because it is critical. We can change the world!
 - *Spiritual Assistants:* We need more SAs and better prepared SAs. We are running out of friars and religious sisters and brothers; we need to train Seculars as SAs.
- *Vice-Minister Diane Menditto*
Diane spoke about visits to fraternities and how good it is to see everyone, including the ministers here today; because “we are family.” Communication is key to community. She referenced the Region website, www.ourladyoftheangels.org which is updated frequently, with lots of good information and photos. Please print copies for those who don't have access or are not “computer literate” which is still about 40% of the membership. We now have Facebook “friends” from 24 foreign countries! Diane will put this morning's presentation on Human Trafficking on the website.
- *Formation Director Nancy Conroy*
 - Copies of the FUN manual are still available in English and in Spanish; follow link to the Region website <http://olangels.tripod.com/7-28-2011-FUN-Manual-English-signed-secure.pdf> It is also available on DVD and on the NAFRA website. www.nafra-usa.org
 - Positive feedback on both the manual and the JPIC workshops from those who attended the cluster presentations. The last presentation will be for the Manhattan Cluster in NYC on 3-2-13 at St. John the Baptist.
 - Nancy is committed to the idea that formation is very important in building up the life of the community. She is planning to put together a **Regional Formation Team** and looking for new ways to support formation in the Region.
 - *Cookbooks* are available for \$10 to benefit the Breadline and also raise funds to dig a well for water in Africa.
- *JPIC Chair Jean Haddad*
Referring to Bro. Doug's remarks, Jean said we have to be a *visible force*; others will see this and be attracted and our strength will grow. The Super Bowl is a great opportunity to be that visible force; to fight exploitation just by showing up: this is evangelizing. Jean asked members to take Sr. Lillian's presentation to heart and bring this back to their fraternities; pray and plan actions in concert with the Region. Last year's Convivenza FAN presentation on “Dark Side of Chocolate” was also a great success; it made people think about the enormous human cost of our cheap and easy, affluent life-styles.
- *Cluster Councilors* Ron introduced the Cluster Councilors: Sheila Tuohy (Westchester); Julia McCants (Manhattan); Andy Klutkowski (North Jersey); and

Mary Frances Reavey (Central Jersey). Andy made brief remarks, asked for suggestions for topics for an event the North Jersey Cluster could host.

- *Treasurer's Report Richard Spana*
 - Rich reviewed the report and expressed gratitude to the membership for doing their part. Thirty-nine fraternities, or 91.5% have contributed their fair share, which is excellent. Total income was \$29,000. The Region has been trying to control expenses and not increase the amount charged, for programs such as the Regional Retreat.
 - Rich provided a worksheet and reviewed the fair share assessment. At 2011 meeting we voted to break the \$5 increase into \$2.50 increments over 2 years. Last year's and this year's budgets are based on \$36.50 per capita, with a base of 870 professed members. Ron added that NAFRA is raising the per capita assessment for the same reasons we are (declining membership). The full \$5 increase was intended to stabilize the budget at a realistic level that could be maintained for the foreseeable future.
 - *Comments and clarifications:*
 1. It was noted that increases are a problem for some fraternities.
 2. Fraternity members who are not attending need to be called to account or other appropriate action taken.
 3. OFS funding structure: fraternities fund the Region; the Region funds National; National funds the International OFS. The fair share is paid on a yearly basis.
 4. It was acknowledged that there are still 9% of fraternities that are not paying their fair share.
 5. Keep in mind that the base is the fraternity as a whole, not the individual member.
 6. Members should *not* be asked to contribute if: they are living out-of-state or out-of-region; are in nursing homes or otherwise incapacitated; are lapsed.
 7. Please update your rosters (including email addresses) and send them in. (Rosters are shared with Anna Geraci, our database manager). Please notify us when you have changes.

➤ **Budget Review and Approval**

- *A motion was made to approve the proposed Region budget; the motion was seconded and approved without changes by the assembled ministers.*
- The Region Retreat will cost \$165 this year; and we hope to maintain that price for the next 5 years.
- Richard received a round of applause, an expression of appreciation for his excellent stewardship as Region Treasurer.

➤ **Minister's Concluding Remarks:**

The challenge is always to live out the Gospel; whether we are addressing human trafficking or any other issue that we might get involved in. He referenced the NAFRA statement at the time of the national elections on issues of the moment. We must find ways of giving witness to what we believe. Nancy Conroy's fraternity cookbook is a wonderful example—but just one example— of how that can be done. Many are the ways to live out our Franciscan commitment: pray about it together, then *act*..

We need to communicate to *all* members that they are stakeholders in the life of the fraternity; it is not just the “job” of the minister or the council. It takes each one of us and all of us together to create a life-giving community. Live the Gospel life, share it, *invite* others; for it is by our *actions* that others will know us and want to join us. People want to get on a moving train, not one that is stuck in the station!

Ron thanked the ministers for their charity, especially for supporting Franciscans International in their hour of need. The survival of this organization means that the voiceless around the world still have someone to speak for them. He thanked all assembled for coming; for their constant dedication, passion and leadership of the local fraternities and all their members, which the Region Council seeks to serve.

- **Suggestions for next Chapter:** Make time for fraternity sharing.
- **Closing Prayer:** Bro. Doug gave the closing prayer.
- **Adjournment:** The 2012 Chapter of Ministers meeting adjourned at 2:50pm.

*Faithfully Submitted,
Kate Asselin, OFS
February 21, 2013*