

St. Elizabeth of Hungary Region Annual Formation Conference – Servant Leadership

The focus of this year's conference was a deep dive into Servant Leadership. The team focused on the Franciscan approach to leadership – leadership attributes, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit in decisions, witnessing to servant leadership, dealing with difficult decisions and resources for formation. In addition on Saturday afternoon, we did an Emmaus walk which allowed us to share what struck us most during the conference.

Mary Galpin, the District 4 Formation Coordinator led us in the first two sessions.

Servant Leadership – Part 1

Mary opened the conference Friday night discussing the Attributes of Servant Leadership. The Holy Spirit distributes different gifts to each of us. She read a passage from Bonaventure's Mirror of Perfection to reinforce that each of us has our own gifts to which we contribute to our fraternities that make us whole. The passage she used was Francis' description of the perfect friar. The perfect friar should have Brother Bernard's perfect faith and love of poverty; Brother Leo's simplicity and purity; Brother Angelo's courtesy; Brother Maseo's gracious look and natural good sense; Brother Giles' mind upraised to God in its highest perfection; Brother Rufino's constant prayer; the patience of Brother Juniper; Brother John of Lauds physical and spiritual courage; Brother Roger's charity; and the caution of Brother Lucidus who was unwilling to stay in one place more than a month, always pointing out our home is not here but in heaven.

Mary then distributed the Beatitudes of a Leader and a shortened version of Servant Leadership Attributes Inventory, **both of which I have included in this email**. Each of us spent time completing the inventory for our own benefit to aid us in understanding our roles.

A theme that was mentioned on Friday night and reinforced on Saturday by Steve Shields is the need to mentor. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is baptized by John then proceeds to the desert for fasting and prayer before He begins His ministry. Matthew's Gospel shows that the very first thing that Jesus did when He returned from the desert was to pick the twelve apostles. A servant leader when he first starts out should immediately ask "Who will take my place?" Jesus spent three years mentoring the apostles to take His place and we are called to do the same in our fraternities.

A servant leader listens and is open to input. He or she is a mentor, not a director. We don't seek personal control or power. This is a role of service as a relationship between equals, not as a leader over others. Leaders serve and servants lead. It is not about being in charge, we take care of those in our charge and just as important, we point out the gifts in others, encouraging them so that they can take our place in the future.

A leader is a person. Leadership is a quality.

Alice Aubuchon then led us in Night Prayer which was followed by a social.

Servant Leadership – Part 2

Mary Galpin spent the second part of this session on Saturday morning witnessing to her experience as a minister and servant leader. She spoke of the errors of pride and at times the risk of leading like its your fraternity. As Francine Gikow reinforced in her session on the Holy Spirit, it is not my fraternity, it is not our fraternity, it is the Holy Spirit's fraternity.

Mary focused on the need for prayer and discernment. Let God lead us as servant leaders. Constantly seek His will and the input of the Holy Spirit.

Shut your eyes to all things of sense and close your ears to all sounds of earth, so as to be able to withdraw into the sanctuary of your baptized soul, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Speak to the Holy Spirit with this prayer:

“O Holy Spirit, soul of my soul, I adore you. Enlighten, guide, strengthen and console me. Tell me what I ought to do and command me to do it. I promise to be submissive to everything that you permit to happen to me. Show me only what is your will. Amen”.

We see all people as a gift of God. As shown with Jesus and the Apostles, the Apostles spent 3 years getting it right. Our term of 3 years is not a lot of time, so it is important to mentor the new leaders. Those who may be reticent to serve remember that God does not call the qualified. He qualifies the called.

She finished with a story about a candidate in initial formation. The woman started in candidacy in 2019, but then suffered a stroke on Mother's day that left her partially paralyzed and in a nursing home. The woman had been very active prior to that and now relied on around the clock care. Mary continued the formation at the nursing home. As the woman could no longer keep up with the chapters, Mary spent the time reading various passages about Francis, Clare, the Friars, the writings and the rule. There were times when Mary wondered if this was of any benefit as many times the woman would fall asleep and Mary would continue to read hoping she could hear. What Mary said was it is not about the doing, but the being.

The woman professed in spring of 2021, I think Mary said on Palm Sunday. Then on Mother's Day that year, she entered into eternal life.

Mary wrapped up the session with the Servant Song.

Making Decisions Together and With the Holy Spirit – Francine Gikow

Francine opened by calling upon the Holy Spirit to come down into each of our hearts to enlighten us.

Francine taught this session about how fraternity counsels should go about involving the Holy Spirit in decisions and in consensus building. She read a passage from **1 Kings 19: 11-13**. This is the passage where Elijah climbs the mountain to consult with God. It is a cautionary tale as

God's will and answer may not be what our will is. God asks Elijah the question "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

What is particularly important about this passage is where does Elijah find God? It is not in the earthquake, or fire or strong wind. It is in the whispering sound. That is how the Holy Spirit speaks to us. It is in the quiet of our hearts and through others. Our own thoughts often get in the way of this unless we are open to deep prayer.

The fraternity is a community of love. Again Francine brought up that it is not my fraternity or our fraternity, but the Holy Spirit's fraternity. The model of love in the fraternity is the love between the three persons of the Holy Trinity. There is no disagreement in the Holy Trinity.

The Holy Spirit needs to be in charge. Francine reminded us to read our rule and gave examples – Articles 2,4 of the Rule and Article 11 and 12.1 of the Constitution.

We are to have a spirit of dedication and unity. The Holy Spirit directing us. The council discerning what the Holy Spirit is telling us. We look for the Holy Spirit in our lives and revealed to us by others in the group.

Listen to the Holy Spirit speaking in our hearts. Listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through others on the council. Trust the Holy Spirit working through others.

Initially, in making decisions our preconceived ideas will get in the way limiting our discernment. We need to set our ideas and thoughts aside first. Involving the Holy Spirit in our decisions involves deep listening and group discernment. Important decisions and difficult conversations need to be submitted to deep prayer leading to deep discernment. We then broke into 6 groups so that we could learn this process of deep listening and discernment.

I have attached the Process of Group Discernment and Deep Listening to this email.

The process is mostly prayer and listening. We were given a scenario where the council had to decide whether an Inquirer is ready for candidacy and being admitted to the order. There were warning signs such as missing lessons without a reason, that the Inquirer later made up. Also, the Inquirer was openly critical of a member and not very charitable. The sponsor also had reservations about a laissez faire approach to formation and lack of self-introspection.

We used the written process attached to reach our decision. There are four rounds to this process with prayer in between. Prayer and listening to others is essential. We opened with the Prayer Before the Crucifix, then remained in silent prayer for 10 minutes. In the first round each of us shared what is moving within us and where we feel that God is calling us personally.

We went back to 5 minutes of silent prayer. In round 2, each of us said what is was that we heard others in the group say and in particular what struck us about what they said. This is a very important step in the process, so it gets repeated in round 3.

We went back to 5 minutes of silent prayer. We again stated what it was that we heard from others in the group and how it struck us, moved us or touched us in this round 3.

After 5 more minutes of silent prayer and reflection, only then did we move to a decision, that being what has been said to us here? What is the group's discernment and consensus?

In our group we discovered that at the outset, we were inclined not to let the Inquirer proceed forward. However, as we shared personal experiences of growth in our own formation and over the years as Franciscans, we decided to allow for candidacy, but pay close attention to addressing all of the warning signs.

When we reconvened, one of the regional formation team members pointed out when we go through this process of discernment, if there are still members with concerns, then we haven't reached discernment or consensus. The council should attempt to adequately address those concerns.

Emmaus Walk

After lunch we broke up into groups of two and three and went outside to share our experiences so far on the weekend. I was teamed up with Steve Shields and Paul Boisvert, who is the Formation Director for St. Bernard's in Leominster. We discussed the challenges faced by many fraternities, including keeping formation lively, getting a slate of candidates to run for office and growing the membership. Fraternities are getting older.

We discussed ways for fraternities in the various districts to meet and interact. I mentioned that Pat had tried for a group meeting of the fraternities in the district, but there was no interest. We also discussed ways to stay in touch between meetings.

Paul is considering a sort of bible study but using the Omnibus of Sources for the study. Using the index, we could have certain sections of the various works such as chapters from Celano, Bonaventure, Three Companions for our monthly study. We could do it at our houses and using Zoom for anyone interested.

Real – World Discussions and Difficult Conversations – Pat Brandwin-Ball

Pat led this discussion as to how to handle difficult decisions and have difficult conversations. There are the right and wrong ways to do this. She focused on fraternity, formation and leadership. How to tell someone that they don't seem to have a Franciscan vocation is a difficult challenge. We need to convey the message with compassion and caring.

It is best to start out saying something positive about the person. Reinforce their good qualities and characteristics. Be specific as to why they don't seem to be a good fit. It is always best for two people to meet with the person. Such a conversation should be separate from either a council or fraternity meeting and always done with compassion.

Pat provided us with examples over the years of situations that she found herself dealing with as minister.

We then broke into smaller groups again with each group dealing with a difficult topic. The group that I was in dealt with the difficulty of getting enough people to form a slate of candidates for council. The ideas that we came up with were:

During initial formation, supplement the chapters in the Franciscan Journey with a discussion to reinforce the need for the candidate to be willing to serve. See if there might be reasons why the candidate might not want to serve. It is important that all members be willing to serve.

Spend the time in formation to go into the details of what each council member's duties are. Provide the candidates with a sense of how much time is needed to handle the office and reinforce that they won't do this on their own, but the whole fraternity is responsible to assist.

Every year, devote one month's formation specifically to servant leadership and the roles/responsibilities of council members. In that formation, have each council member describe specifically what they have done over the past year and how many hours they spent doing it.

Have a process whereby after an election, the previous council member mentors the new member. The council member needs to be available to answer questions and mentor the new member.

Also, once a year have a combined fraternity/council meeting so that all the members of the fraternity get to see what takes place at the council meeting.

Attached is the worksheet that we used for our discussion.

Who Will Take My Place? – Steve Shields

Steve wrapped up Saturday afternoon with a discussion on mentoring. The first question that a newly elected council member should be asking themselves is who will come after them. When you identify someone that you think would have the skills, let them know the qualities that you see in them. Encourage them and mentor them, so that when your term is up, there is someone that can then take up where you leave off.

Steve used episode 3 of The Chosen where Jesus is sending the apostles out two by two to announce the good news. The apostles resist doing this, claiming they are not qualified and fearing for their lives. Jesus answers their questions and gently encourages them to be willing.

Resources for Formation – Jack McDermott

I was not able to stay for Sunday's session. Jack McDermott covered the various resources for formation and led formation breakout sessions.

The resources presented were Formation Directors Handbook, Servant Leadership Manual, Form the Formator (FUN Manual).

Steve is putting the power points and resources into PDF format. When I receive all this information, I will be passing it along to you.

If you have any questions, please let me know.