

First Chapter Steering Committee session at the Guardians & Vicars meeting  
3:30 to 4:15 on Tuesday, August 7, 2018  
Guided Meditation on the icon "St. Francis and the Novices"

At the end of the guided meditation friars were invited to journal, to share their thoughts and reflections on the icon or on how the Spirit is moving us to stir into flame the gifts God has given us.

Twenty eight friars handed in responses:

1. Praise be to you Lord for brother fire. It is difficult to let go our own way of life in the Province. It is more difficult when we are divided. Let us ask our good Lord to help us accept the reality of our times in the order. Let us be humble, and obedient to the move of the Spirit and follow God. Always together as brothers. Amen.
2. We need to listen to the stories of others.
3. This hope will not let us be disappointed, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Baptize us in the Holy Spirit, so that we can receive your power to be your witnesses. Practice mindfulness spirit my spirit.
4. Surgieron varias meditaciones e imagines despues de ver el icono de san Francisco con los frailes. 1. Unificacion de la creacion de Dios, representada en la capillita del fondo a mano derecho: presencia de Dios. 2. Los frailes feanciscanos que representa la humanidad creada; 3. La madre naturaleza, compartiendo en armonia el fuego del amor de Dios y vida, en la fogata que alumbr a la oscuridad y disipa las tinieblas, da calor y vida.
5. Our efforts to be multicultural is a gift we bring, a gift that brings warmth and light to our fraternities, our ministries and the world we live in. our openness and honesty in our relationship with each other can be a light needed in the darkness of polarization.
6. The futures of religious life lies in its mystical and prophetic dimensions.
7. The spirit is inviting us to trust. Our vows were made in the past but require constant renewal. Just as love is a choice, so too our vows! The spirit invites and emboldens us to trust and begin yet again.
8. I hope there is room at the campfire for the older friars, for the future stories that unite us. I hope it's not passed our bed time.
9. The spirit is inviting me to be open to what is new and challenging and to be patient with change and with disappointments. God is in control and leading us into our future.
10. We are bound and sustained by the flame that brought us together. We carry this light into the future.
11. I am TOUCHED BY THE NOVICE WHO IS STIRRING THE FLAMES. EVEN IN THIS TIME OF transition and change, the flame of the Gospel need to b stirred and the flame cannot die. The challenge for me will be made by me to keep stirring the fire with my gifts, and not let the fire die without me.
12. What gifts do I have to share with my brothers? Am I willing to sit by the fire? Do I feel part of the circle? How willing am I to let go of my ideas, plans, hopes in order to be a brother among brothers? Sitting around the fire.

13. Francis sitting with the brothers opening their hearts and sharing their stories.  
Communicating and being vulnerable with one another, praying together, we need to do the same. The warmth of the fire embraces the brothers sitting around it. May the fire of the Holy Spirit and the sharing of our own stories personal stories fire our hearts as brothers.
14. Consider the aspects before us: the dark of the woods, and the night (the fear that is evoked reminds me of the words of Jesus: Fear is useless. We are also drawn to the light and warmth of the fire circle, the chapel light and we acknowledge the presence potential and inspired by our God (chapel) and by our brothers (fire circle).
15. Logs of wood: flame; life: Christ; letting go(fire): God's vision; trust and courage: faith.
16. "be not afraid", "walk by faith not by sight" openness: espe. To where the H.S. is leading us; listen attentively and not judgmentally to our brothers who have a different opinion than my own; see this process R & R as an opportunity to grow in each of our individual Franciscan vocation and has a province as we move into the consolidation of provinces; with the reduction of numbers what new opportunities will be open to each of us?
17. We need to stretch as individuals and as a group having the confidence that God will provide and enable us to do even more than we can imagine or think possible.
18. The home light is all present in the small chapel in the dark forest. The trees seem to be guarding the little group. I relate to this image as a metaphor. We're in a context of being smaller and in a world that is becoming less interested in commitment to our faith. Logically, we should go along with this. But the warm welcome of the firelight and the starry sky draws the brothers into fraternal life for the sake of others for a mission into this less committed society. Even though it's small, we'll always have a home and a mission when we believe in the light of Christ.
19. Because we hold deeply, the love we have for each other, thankfully we strive for reconciliation with each other, in humbleness and fraternal love. Because we promise to belong to a fraternity, we strive always to walk and be present to each other, even a times we wish not, love is greater!!!
20. The Spirit might be asking us to think beyond former boundaries. We will need gifts of acceptance and trust for a revitalized future together.
21. As we discussed, we all have gifts less or more, and our gifts compliment each other. Just like the campfire, it needs woods, air, and empty spaces. Some of us are woods, some of us are air, and some of us are empty spaces. If we allow ourselves compliment each other and be ready to empty ourselves, the Holy Spirit will be the fire in us, for us, and around us. The only thing that we can see now is fire and light, not wood, not air, and not empty spaces.

22. Studying the icon, I sense the simplicity of our Franciscan origins. Each brother is unique – one fills with joy as Francis' teaching-one drawn to tears almost, allowing the inspiring words of Francis to touch his heart. One is sterring the fire-keeping us alive-He is Martha. The Spirit invites us as unique and beloved of Gods to mirror the life and spirit of St. Francis, the mirror of Christ!
23. At a campfire in the woods, the air is fresh and there are no time limits on those who share stories, joys, fears, hopes and frustrations. In this type of space, the Spirit opens our hearts to honestly share our hearts to honestly share and calls us to be attentive to what other brothers share. We all bear the flame of God's love in our hearts. God's loving spirit calls us to loving, deep and honest sharing around our hopes and fears in a context that gives us lots of time and space.
24. To search for the light, to be enlightened in order to see, love and act with the mind of Christ.
25. In the entire cosmos, I am here in this specific space. It is here that we learn from Francis. It is here that I learn about christ's love for me. It is here in the vastness of the universe that we learn from each other. Do we really walk in his footprints or don't we walk at his side? Jesus is with us. Where (this place, this space) two or more are gathered, there am I"
26. I believe the Spirit is calling us to a renewal of our spirituality, to growth, transformation and healing, then to act upon our decision to love as Christ lived his life, as Francis and Clare lived theirs, I am to do the same in fraternity and mission. I see myself at the fire in relationship with the novices, still growing and learning about God's love for me placing my gifts at the service of others.
27. I feel that the friars in the icon circle are inviting me to join them. Francis sees me and the novice to his left is welcoming me with a hand wave. I feel the spirit drawing me to sacrifice more of my own personal comfort and convenience to relate more an spend more time with my brothers – even when I do not feel like it. Take more of an active role in our friars community life and community exercises.
28. Spirit is encouraging each of us to let our ego be tempered (like gold) not on starry night, rather day in and day out.