

Conversatio Continued
More Feedback from House Conversations
On the R + R Process
September- October 2018

The following is a listing of the conversatio feedback the Chapter Steering Committee has received since the October 1 issue of OFM.FYI was distributed.

During the last week of August the Chapter Steering Committee distributed a **Fall *Conversatio*** to every house of the Province, to friars not currently living in a friary, and to friars of our province currently living outside of the United States. In this Fall *Conversatio* friars were asked to reflect on, and then have a discussion on, the following question:

What areas of concern would you like the Province to realistically address in our Provincial Chapter to help us over the course of the next three years?

After the conclusion of the *conversatio* the participants were invited to compose a short synthesis of what was discussed, perhaps starting like this, “We, the brothers gathered at the Friary at (the local fraternity's name), feel that the Chapter might address the following areas of concern:”

The following is a listing of the *conversatio* feedback the Chapter Steering Committee has received since the October 1 issue of OFM.FYI was distributed. (The October 1 issue published *conversatio* feedback received as of September 27, 2018)

- The provinces plan to unify is too rushed and should be delayed.
- Some type of reconciliation process to help us both acknowledge and respect how divided we are.
- Develop programs to help our lay collaborators work with and for us
- Have some concrete statement about the sex abuse scandal rocking the world wide church
- Have another province wide convocation specifically regarding sexuality like we did after the sex scandal of the 1990's.
- Help us get back a joyful spirit of going forward together
- Can we learn from other Orders which have done similar re-organization in the USA? More importantly to follow up with their responses to see if even more unexpected results happened years later after the reorganization.
- Our general awareness of the cultures of the Mid-West, Northeast, South and Southwest ? It would help if for those friars who have not spent any great time in the other parts of the USA to get an experience of doing so at friaries across the nation. In the same token, we should be open to hosting friars from the other parts of the US who have never experienced the Far West states and our friaries. This social exchange is crucial to deepening our sense and awareness of other cultural regions as well as the subtle differences in friar life in other provinces.
- Educate friars in cooking, industrial arts or at least basic home maintenance
 - cooking,

- industrial arts or at least basic home maintenance
- knowledge of other major religions—just the basics
- Continue to close excess ministries and begin discussions about what new ministries we could start as one province.
- Have more than one or two days of recollection with multiple houses per year. We need to spend more time together.
- What do we want to be going forward into this new millennium?
- How can we honor our older brothers that built these Legacy Ministries? As we let go of them. What would it look like?
- Dare to dream boldly/ think out of the box
- To be open to the movement of the spirit in this process.
- How can we work with the laity?
- To develop new programs for a new millennium.
- Movement toward the formation of a single new U.S. Province of friars. Concerns around this area predominated in the conversatio discussion. Various dimensions of this single area of concern included:
 - Addressing revitalization at the local friary level;
 - How to honor and bring the positive elements of our Province history into the new configuration;
 - How to mourn the “passing” of our Provinces and to give attention to grieving as a catalyst for internal healing, knowing that our brothers around the U.S. are going through the same thing (possibly assisted by an outside minister who’s not a friar);
 - How to build trust while not knowing what “this thing” is going to look like;
 - Revitalization of our life as a community of friars in the U.S. as a path of evangelization, being visible to others in our movement from “I” to “We” with all our heart;
 - How to get some clarity around why friars are leaving the Order at this time, or simply acknowledging in some way that this is happening and that this has been a recurring response of individual friars during times of change and renewal throughout our Franciscan history;
 - How to initiate shared projects now, working together to build confidence, including an event such as a shared pilgrimage (possibly in every Province) moving along a route set up to connect and honor important places where the friars have served in the past or are preparing to leave;
 - Bring together “interest groups” (elder care, retreat, parish) and let the younger friars start dreaming together about where we need to be in the years ahead
 - Connect revitalization to on-going formation by putting an accent on attention to personal priorities and accountability through a launch of a project involving the “personal life plan”.
- Our response as friars to a national political arena polarized and in some sense at war. How can we be agents of reconciliation by applying principles of respect, humility, and good listening?
- As a general suggestion, we believe it is necessary for the chapter to feed our interior lives -- in order for us to feed others. We clustered our suggestions in to themes. We are quite aware that these suggestions would require resources, human and financial. We

observed that several of the suggestions implicate the work of ongoing formation. It appears unreasonable to expect the province director of ongoing formation to devote more time and effort to that ministry than he already does, and thus, the work of others may be required.

1. Renewal, revitalization, and restructuring

- Some friars have a lot of anxiety about the future due to the May vote to create one new province. Some friars feel wounded by the process and the vote. How can we best address anxieties and wounds? Is there a healing process appropriate? How can we approach the transitions underway. – some that are inevitable, and some that are chosen -- and how can we approach this change process so that we approach the future with a sense of hope?
- We need to strongly encourage friars to engage in interprovincial activities. We need to encourage and challenge people to participate in these. Personal relationships with friars from other provinces can play an important role in overcoming fear.
- We propose that the chapter request the general curia to establish a custody of St. Barbara, as part of one US province.

2. Ongoing formation

- We are concerned that something is amiss with the departure of so many young solemnly professed friars. Are we really addressing the needs of the younger friars? Are we placing them in places that nurture their spirits? Or deplete their spirits? Are we missing the spirit some how? Can we do something more or different? There seems to be an inattention to the pastoral care to younger friars.

3. Provincial ministries

- We need to continue to downsize provincial ministerial commitments, in order to be able to support them effectively. At the same time, we need to dialogue with local churches to discern together where we can best serve in new opportunities for presence and ministries. How can we facilitate the gifts of the brothers being shared in ministry?

4. Our evangelical witness

- We want to continue to look outward, to engage the world, even as we work through issues of diminishment. Pope Francis has challenged us with *Evangelii Gaudium*, *Laudato Si*, and *Exultate et Gaudate*. How can we best follow the lead of Pope Francis? How can we proclaim *Laudato Si* – not only with words, but with concrete actions? We want to encourage and support our institutions and parishes to express care for creation through specific initiatives, drawing resources from external grants, that can green our institutions.
- What can we do as a province to support women during this period? So much pain has come to light, caused violence by men against women. What more could we do?

- *Revitalization* remains essential. We need to re-examine our friar life as it is being lived in the individual houses. Are we satisfied with a “low bar”? Perhaps a step toward community revitalization would be to foster individual friar revitalization plans.
- We noted the polarization in the society of our country. This polarization has crept into other areas of life including Church and fraternities. Could we have future workshops/activities on building personal relationships (human development) and getting to know friars from other provinces?
- Another area of concern was the apparent high rate of younger friars (in age or religion) seeking exclaustation. Why?
- We need to have better/greater outreach to youth and young adults.
- We must continue and revitalize interest in the mission “*ad gentes*”.
- All of these concerns are interrelated in some way. If we are serious about ongoing conversion and following Jesus Christ in a radical way the rest will fall into place.