



Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada

Leadership Bulletin #1

As part of the opening prayers for a Fraternity Council meeting, the OFS Ritual offers the following:

“O Lord, you have called us to serve the Secular Franciscan Fraternity as its leaders. Through our good example, wise decisions and courageous action, may we faithfully animate and guide our fraternity...”

From this prayer we can draw several essential conclusions regarding our collective role and responsibility on a Fraternity Council:

- We are asked to serve
- We are asked to lead
- We are asked to make decisions
- We are asked to act (i.e. implement these decisions)
- We are asked to animate and guide

Given these relatively straightforward statements regarding the responsibilities of a Fraternity Council, it is evident that leadership skills development need be an on-going part of our formation. In other words, we are called to enhance and use our gifts and talents to help keep our fraternities strong and moving forward.

As many of you will recall we held a week-end leadership workshop last Fall devoted to fostering our effective use of our God-given abilities as Secular Franciscans. One of the elements of this dynamic workshop was for each of us to complete a personal profile. The program that was used had a religious context, and thus we had our “natural abilities and inclinations” characterized as: apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers. It proved to be an interesting and rather enjoyable exercise.

But what was the essential rationale behind such an endeavour? Simply stated, this profiling exercise was meant to remind us that we all have different gifts and different approaches to fulfilling our responsibility towards Council. For many of us this was a self-evident truth: “we are not all cut from same cloth”, as the saying goes. **As we strive to work together effectively on Council, this awareness of our differences can be very helpful.**

As a way of reminding ourselves of lessons learned at the workshop and sharing these insights with others who were not able to attend, we invite you to undertake the following:

- At an upcoming fraternity Council meeting, take the time to reflect on one another's gifts. This needs to be done in a straightforward and respectful way.
- Simply ask members to identify the gifts that they see in **other** members of Council.
- These gifts can be written down on paper. Note: A lengthy list of members' gifts is not necessary...just a few is sufficient.
- Then take the time to share together the gifts that you see in others, offering a brief explanation of how and why these gifts are apparent.
- Finally in a constructive manner foster a mutual discussion about: a) why a Council needs a variety of gifts to serve well; and b) how the gifts of the various members of Council can be complementary or supportive of each other.

This may seem like a rather simple endeavour, but it may serve to strengthen the collective decision-making and action of your Council. It may also lead to better awareness and understanding of the personal differences among your Council members, thereby avoiding any potential misunderstandings or points of conflict.

As a reminder, here are a few words from our Leadership Development Workshop facilitator, Paul Donovan:

As we reflect on the gifts and talents of each Council member, it's important to recognize that leadership within the Fraternity is a shared responsibility, one that thrives on the diversity of gifts within the community. Each of us brings a unique set of abilities and inclinations—whether as apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, or teachers—that contribute to the health and vitality of our Fraternity. This diversity is not a challenge to be managed, but a treasure to be embraced. When we come together and allow these gifts to complement one another, we form a more dynamic and effective team.

In the spirit of St. Francis, leadership is about service, not control. It is about empowering each person to contribute according to their unique strengths and working in collaboration to animate and guide our Fraternity. When we honor the variety of gifts present in our community, we ensure that our decisions are informed by a broader perspective, that our actions are strengthened by a collective effort, and that our Fraternity remains true to its mission of serving God and one another with humility and love. This is the heart of Franciscan leadership: not just to lead, but to walk together, united in our shared gifts and common mission.

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord. (1 Corinthians 12:4-5)