

A Convocation of Lay Brothers – What is Ours To Do?

St. Francis Retreat Center

August 10-14, 2015

After hearing two extraordinary presentations, first by William Short, OFM on the “History of the Lay Brother in the Order”, then by Sean D. Sammon, FMS, on the “Brothers for the Church and World”, we shared our vocation stories, as well as discussed our identity as lay friars.

In the past, we saw ourselves as builders and stabilizers of the community, tenacious and humble workers, usually doing manual labor, living lives of prayer in joy. This identity we still adhere to.

We see our vocation as being in touch with goodness and holiness and able to be creative in various service and works.

We see ourselves as being accessible and free to accompany people as they need on their journey. We want to lead prayerful and joyful lives of creative service and to support all our brothers, cleric and lay, to live out the vocation to which we have been called.

Thus we make these recommendations:

We recommend that all initial formation programs be developed with the primary focus on forming one to live the Franciscan way of life.

To that end, we recommend:

- 1) That friars in temporary formation not enroll in formal studies until the third year of temporary profession.
- 2) That a lay brother be included on the Postulancy, Novitiate and Post-Novitiate formation teams.
- 3) That we take the necessary steps to develop and implement an interprovincial Postulancy program.
- 4) That we provide for the training and support of formation directors on all levels of formation.

What Are the Next Steps?

During the final session of the Brothers' Convocation, we asked the question: Where do we go from here? The recommendations include:

1. That we continue to hold convocations of this nature in the future. Some suggestions included: meet every other year; invite all friars in formation; form a committee to begin the planning of the next convocation.
2. That the Interprovincial Retreat Committee (already in existence) organize a retreat based on the themes of the week.
3. That we encourage each province to hold a convocation of lay brothers at least once every three years.
4. That we petition Br. Michael Perry, OFM, and the General Definitory to convoke an international assembly of lay brothers to be held in either 2017 or 2018.
5. That we encourage Br. Michael Perry, OFM and the General Definitory to continue to request a change in the status of the Order as per Article 3, 2 of the General Constitutions.

Respectfully submitted,

The Planning Committee:

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