

CIOFS PROJECT 2008

St. Francis Region – Southern California – USA

September 13, 2008

In putting this report together, we realized that CIOFS is not looking for textbook answers to the questions that our Minister General sent to us. We created 4 Lesson Plans and spread them out over a 4 month span, May through August. As the months evolved, we (the facilitators) noticed an evolution taking place in most fraternities. They were coming to a better understanding of their profession and had made changes in their lives. So we are responding below with 3 major observations we felt were of importance to CIOFS because many of the fraternities responded this way, plus some other observations and stories from SFO's in our Region.

Major Observation #1 (what does my profession mean to me now):

1. The importance of the commitment to the SFO, and my relationship with my entire Franciscan family.
2. We are all responsible for formation of one another and our monthly meeting should be created around good solid Franciscan spirituality.
3. It's our way to put our dreams into action.
4. That the SFO is truly my second family.
5. That our monthly meeting is a spiritual exercise in our vocations.
6. It strengthened our commitment as professed members.
7. We will wear our Tau crosses daily instead of once a month.
8. We look forward to sharing our journey together in small meeting discussions.
9. We now feel like we belong to a family.

Major Observation #2 (what changes have you made in your life because of the CIOFS project):

1. We realize the importance of modeling our Franciscan vocation with everyone and everywhere. It can make a difference to others. So we will try harder to be a good model.
2. Because we feel the sense of belonging to our worldwide Order and that we are truly a part of our Region, we will attend more of the Regional events.
3. We are listening better and more willing to enter into a dialogue with an open mind.
4. The small group discussions over the 4 months made us realize how important it is that we continue with this form and methodology in our Initial and On-Going Formation programs. Witnessing who we are with one another is a testimony of our Franciscan vocation.
5. We are prioritizing our lives with newly realized priorities.
6. We are living our Rule, and by doing so, we are bringing the Gospel to life.

7. We came to the reality that having WHAT WE NEED not WHAT WE WANT is most important.
8. We like the open sharing and listening.
9. We realize that BEING is more important than DOING.

Major Observations #3 (based on asking what did you like about the CIOFS project):

1. We learned more about fraternity relationships.
2. We felt a sense of belonging to our worldwide Order.
3. We realized we had better growth with regular attendance.
4. We felt part of the uniformity of fraternities all over the world.
5. We learned more about the meaning of our RULE and are more interested in learning more.
6. Many mentioned they tried not to miss any of the CIOFS meetings.
7. We liked praying with other SFO's all over the world.

Requests made by many Seculars:

1. Have more On-going Formation about the meaning of Discernment.
2. Have more Regional workshops like the CIOFS project.
3. Help us to stay connected to CIOFS and keep us informed.
4. Have Region prepare more lessons plans for the local fraternities. We liked the uniformity of doing what other fraternities in Region were doing.

Stories about changes made and what happened:

1. I own a restaurant and when people would come in and sit for a long time chatting after they had finished eating, I would get very upset because we couldn't serve more customers. But because of the CIOFS project, I came to the reality that they were ministering to each other in their own way and that as a Franciscan I should make them feel more welcome in my restaurant. It has taken a great deal of stress out of my life. Thank you CIOFS and St. Francis Region.
2. When I became a Franciscan, I would go and visit some sick people once in a while. So, since we started the CIOFS project, I started visiting an elderly lady regularly and the last time I visited her, she told me she wanted to become a Catholic. I never mentioned this to her and I never asked her, it was her own decision. I know I have changed, because I am happier and living the Gospel better.

Responses from fraternity council members and Facilitators:

We noticed that attendance improved each month as the project progressed.

General Comments:

The program created had the correct mixture of ingredients to interest members and make them think about the order and their profession.

1. The international request gave a sense of importance and universality to the project.
2. The concepts were basic and strengthened or rebuilt the basic concepts, especially understanding and commitment that were slipping away or never established.
3. Provided an excellent opportunity to reestablish the formation form and methodology.
4. Improved sharing and fellowship in fraternities.
5. They now appreciate the uniformity and diversity of St. Francis Region and CIOFS more than ever.

It provided a good vehicle to understand where people are and their understanding of basic concepts of our documents.

The presentations have shown that many now have a better understanding of their commitment and what they joined.

The process developed and the effect on many members are the real results of this project.