



Significant Moments Transformative Moments in Our 50 Year History

1954 - 50s & 60s – Sister Formation Conference (SFC)

1965 Mother Viola Leininger, OSF (Millvale, PA), as a result of lobbying at Conference of Major Superiors of Women (CMSW) and Franciscan Sisters Education Conference (FSEC) for Franciscans to gather for the purpose of Franciscan renewal, succeeds in establishing a federation - 30 founding congregations (CMSW began in 1956 – FSEC Franciscan Sisters Education Conference: 1952- 1976)

1966 April Pre-Federation Meeting I

Thirty-three major superiors and/or formation personnel meet at Mt. Alvernia, PA and approve “a Federation of Franciscan Sisters Communities of the United States for the purpose of mutual assistance in renewal and adaptation.”

1966 November Pre-Federation Meeting II

Representatives from twenty-five congregations meet at Mt. Alvernia, PA to begin building structures for the new organization, including establishment of an Executive Board, a Speakers’ Bureau and a Commission on Formation to oversee research, continuing education of members, and ministry in health care and in teaching.

1967 January

Formal declaration is submitted to the Sacred Congregation for Religious in Rome expressing intent to establish the Federation.

1967 April

Board meets at Mt. Alvernia, PA to compile the statutes, the organizational chart, and to set the date and place for annual meetings of the federated congregations. The official name given the new organization is **THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF AMERICA**. The decision is made to produce a spiritual document which will identify the role of Third Order Franciscan women religious in the U.S.

1967 September 23 First Annual Meeting of the newly-formed federation. Fifty-six major superiors, representing 18,000 Sisters, gather in Chicago. Goals and structures are established to recapture the spirit of their founder, St. Francis of Assisi. The group also authorizes the formation of a Research and Writing Group for the spiritual document. Seven Sisters from various congregations with theological expertise are chosen, and form the Research Commission for the spiritual document.

1968 January to August

The Spiritual Document Research Group conducts surveys and workshops with all member congregations

to elicit their lived experience of the Franciscan charism as Third Order followers. The group draws on newly available translations of Francis's writings, and identifies most with *The Letter to the Faithful* and the *Testament*. In this process the unique charism of the penitential tradition is recognized as CONTINUING CONVERSION, out of which flows other values and themes. On these the spiritual document is based and completed in August, 1968.

1968 September 15 Second Annual Meeting of the newly formed Federation

- Seventy-five congregations recorded as members of the Federation. Fifty-seven elected leaders of member congregations participate in the meeting.
- The spiritual document *Go To My Brethren*, is accepted and approved as a resource for Third Order Franciscan congregations in their renewal efforts and re-formulating their Constitutions. This document will serve as a bridge toward what will become the "Rule Project."

1970

- Executive Board meets with OFMs to share insights into Franciscan life and prayer .
- Federation establishes new relationships with First & Second Orders, TOR men, and Secular Franciscans.

1970-71 The Federation sponsors and missions four Sisters to form a retreat ministry team, "*Tau in Pilgrimage*." The group travels across the country giving retreats to Franciscan congregations based on themes from *Go To My Brethren*, on the charism and values of the penitential-evangelical way of life.

1971

- Official name changes to **Franciscan Sisters of the United States of America**
- Federation sponsors a week-long conference in Wheaton, IL, in November for prayer and discussion among professed Franciscan women and men as well as lay persons (including Dorothy Day) interested in Franciscan spirituality. The "Wheaton Affirmation" summarizes the experience in a confession of Franciscan faith and sixteen resolutions for Franciscan living.

1974 Sr. Rose Margaret Delaney, SFP, president, attends the Fourth Franciscan Tertiary Inter-Obediential Congress in Madrid, Spain (Rule Project) [now known as the International Franciscan Conference.] This marks the first time our US organization is represented internationally. This meeting will pave the way to a new Rule.

1974 November Chicago conference attended by 350 Franciscan women and men on themes of prayer, community, and the Franciscan contract with the world

1976 Spring

Questionnaire sent to 68 member congregations for response to the Statement/Madrid Document; only 16 congregations respond. Assumption that "*Go To My Brethren*" will be sufficient to guide Franciscan congregations in US through renewal.

1979 October 3 – 9 in Assisi, Italy

Executive Director, Sr. Roberta Cusack, OSF (Springfield) participates in International Franciscan Commission; discovers growing international momentum for a new Rule.

1981

- Inclusion of the Congregations of the Third Order Regular Brothers as members of the Federation
- Official name change – **Franciscan Federation of the Brothers and Sisters of the United States**
- Establishment of The Rule and Life and Justice & Peace committees, thus reestablishing a purpose and vision for the Federation (Rule and Life Committee later changes to Spirit and Life Committee)
- Brussels text of Rule evolves from discussions

- Midwest Franciscans in Collaboration is begun for elected leaders in Midwest congregations

1982 International Rule Project – Sr. Margaret Carney OSF and Fr. Thaddeus Horgan SA, are part of Work Group which prepares process for the reflection and decision on “Brussels” text at CFI meeting in Rome

1983

- Member approval of new TOR Rule in March; Papal approval December 8, 1982
- “*Roots and Wings*” – 5-day training seminar to learn Charism and Rule; offered nine times over two-year period, including in Puerto Rico and England
- First Franciscan Perpetual Vow cooperative program takes place in Sylvania, OH June-July
- Resolution to United Nations General Assembly – 800th Anniversary of St. Francis- for peace and discontinuing the production of nuclear weapons. This is the first official public communication of the first worldwide organization of TOR Franciscans. This action will later evolve into Franciscans International obtaining NGO status.
- New Rule is published in English; Commentary written by Sr. Margaret Carney OSF and Fr. Thaddeus Horgan SA

1985

- Franciscan Federation is listed in the Official Catholic (Kenedy) Directory
- A national office is set up in Pittsburgh and a staff is hired
- International Franciscan Conference (IFC-TOR) is established and meets for the first time
- Ratification of statement: *A Vision of Franciscan Peacemaking*
- Financial anxiety in the Federation – curtailing committee activity
- Beginning Franciscan collaborative effort toward NGO status
- Secular Franciscan Order members allowed to become Federation Associate Members

1985-87

- Sr. Rose Cecilia Case (Aston, PA) and Sr. Ann Carville (Milvale, PA) attend Regional meetings in Pittsburgh, Joliet and Philadelphia – forerunner to new organizational structure of regions that will develop later
- “*The World is Our Cloister*” - workshops offered to help Franciscans working for peace and justice

1988

- Model of governance changes to a five person board: Three elected (President, Vice President, and Second Vice President) and two appointed members
- Symposium sponsored by OFMs and Federation to present the three week course, *Build with Living Stones*, focusing on Mission. Aston, PA. 121 participants

1990-91 **25th Anniversary and Federation Renewal**

- August 1991 –Federation moves from a “leadership only” to a “leadership/grassroots” organization
- Inter-congregational Initial Formation pilot program – Common Franciscan Formation in Chicago
- Growing financial concerns for Federation
- Continued discussion of regional structure and needs
- Office is moved to Chicago
- FF has 101 member congregations, representing 17,000+ TORs

1991-1995 Executive Director – Sr Kathleen Moffatt OSF (Aston); office is moved to Aston, PA

1991 ff National workshops are developed and/or promoted and presented regionally:

- *Seeding a New Hope* (1991-) to integrate TOR charism with the transformative elements of religious life
- *Facing the Incarnate Christ* (1995-)
- *Rebirth of a Charism* (1997-)
- *Singing the Cosmic Symphony* (1999-)

1992

- 10th Anniversary of Rule Symposium at St. Bonaventure University. Present were Margaret Carney and Roland Foley who voted on the Rule. 129 Participants.
- Newsletter takes on fresh look and new significance in educating members on the charism, sharing programs and reflecting the ups and downs of the organization

1992-93

- Office is moved to Washington DC
- Six geographical regions are established with regional representatives as members of National Board
- Clare Fest celebrated in conjunction with AFC in LaCrosse, WI as part of 800th Anniversary of Clare's birth

1993-94

- National Board issues *Response to the Lineamenta in light of the 1994 Synod ... on Consecrated Life* which distinguishes the evangelical lifestyle from the apostolic lifestyle
- Federation Vision and Mission Statements are developed

1993-97 Summer Enrichment Program for Federation members at Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, including special sessions for perpetual vow preparation

1994 Gathering of a few presidents of Franciscan-sponsored colleges during American Catholic Colleges & Universities (ACCU) meeting, January, Washington, DC., seeding the future Association of Franciscan Colleges & Universities (AFCU)

1994-95 ***A Short History of the Franciscan Federation TOR*** by Elise Saggau, OSF(Little Falls, MN) is written

1995 First ever Joint Conference of Federation with Friars – Anaheim, CA

1996 Common Franciscan Novitiate inaugurated at Tau Center, Winona, MN by seven mid-west congregations

1997-98 Fifteen Franciscans arrested, two face imprisonment for 'crossing the line' at Fort Benning, GA, in protest against the School of the Americas (SOA)

1998

- Eastern Franciscan Common Novitiate inaugurated at Franciscan Handmaids of Mary on Staten Island, NY
- Franciscan Family Assembly, Milwaukee, WI co-sponsored by Franciscan Friars Conference and Federation
- *Resource Manual on Franciscan Christology* is published by OFMs and used widely by TOR Franciscans
- *The Canticle of the Sun* Earth Conference is held in Sylvania, OH
- Franciscan Federation is comprised of 83 congregations with 12,300+ members

1998-2001 Franciscan Family Council tried; Federation not ready to have one joint Franciscan organization

1999 Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities is established

1999-2000 Viability Project – task force develops the resource, *Journeying Toward Reconfiguration* to assist individual Franciscan congregations in making decisions about their futures.

2001-02

- Board approves the development of a Franciscan Prayer Book
- First on-line registrations for the Annual Federation Conference (AFC)

2002-03

- 20th Anniversary of Third Order Rule is celebrated at the 2002 AFC
- *Freeing the Fire* project initiated to re-image Third Order Franciscan life, and to image a relational model of 'federating' - Marriotsville, MD

2003-04

- *Freeing the Fire* Assemblies are held in Washington DC, Frankfort, IL, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
- ***"Make US an Instrument of Peace: A Franciscan Evaluation of the National Security Strategy of the United States"*** First time there is a united (inter-family) Franciscan voice on Capitol Hill

2004-05

- 40th Anniversary of the Franciscan Federation as an organization
- First time Nix and Associates is contracted to coordinate AFC 2004
- Continued questions about regionalization, financial challenges, diminishing number of members

2005-06

- Franciscan Leadership Workshops held in Frankfort, IL and Aston, PA
- A discussion among elected leaders about statutes morphs into a discussion about the need to change the Federation structure
- National office moves to Monastery of the Holy Land in Washington, DC
- Peace and Justice Committee works to promote peace as a viable option in Middle East; also focuses on immigration, environment

2007

- **25th Anniversary of the TOR Rule**
- Tiffin Franciscans assume task of bringing Prayer Book project to completion

2007-08

- Establishment of the Transformation Task Force – transition of Federation structure
- *Freeing the Fire* and *Spirit and Life* committees disband

2008-09 Implementation Task Force is established to implement the new structure which includes three new Commissions: Elected Leaders (CEL), Charism Services (CCS), and Regions (COR)

2008-13 Experimentation with new Federation government structure

2009

- Official Vatican approval of the merger of the Midwest Common Franciscan Novitiate with the Eastern Franciscan Common Novitiate to form the TOR Franciscan Common Novitiate
- National Board develops materials to assist congregations as they prepare for Apostolic Visitation
- CEL members decide not to seek canonical status
- *Franciscan Morning and Evening Prayer* project is completed and goes on sale.
- Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) committee is established and takes on duty of bringing resolutions to AFC

2010 Membership in Federation expands to include associates/co-journeers of Franciscan TOR congregations

2011 Executive Director Ann Lyons announces at AFC that Franciscan Federation is debt-free after a long financial crisis.

2012

Provisional by-laws approved by CEL at annual AFC

2013

- Late winter, early spring - Search for Executive Director fails, which inaugurates discussion about the viability and desirability of the Franciscan Federation
- Interim Executive Director appointed
- National Board given task of preparing for a more extensive meeting to discern future of FF
- National Board begins interest assessment for forming one Franciscan Family Organization

2014 April – *Dare to Image* meeting in Chicago

- Unanimous vote to explore new avenues for FF; Ad Hoc Committee formed with volunteers
- Dianne Kaimann (Oldenburg, IN) asked to continue as Interim Executive Director until 2016
- Sabbath Year of prayer, rest, and reflection launched in preparation for Celebration 2016

2015

- Members asked to reflect on aspects of Franciscan charism, January – May
- Ad Hoc Committee presents Sabbath year process – June AFC
- Extensive cleaning of office files in preparation for making national office more mobile

2016

- **Celebration of 50 years for FF at AFC**
- End of term for Interim Executive Director
- Appointment of new co-directors
- FF has 55 member congregations, representing 6,500+ individual members

Materials gathered from the Federation archives, from *The Short History of the Franciscan Federation*, Elise Saggau OSF, Franciscan Federation TOR, Washington DC, 1995, and through the assistance of Francis Therese Woznicki, SSJ-TOSF and Kathleen Moffatt, OSF. Compiled by Dianne Kaimann, OSF and Edna Michel, OSF