

(Slide 1) COMMUNICATION

Why talk about Communication? Could it be an issue, a challenge for some of us?

How important is Communication? So important that, Over the years, NAFRA has aimed time and time again to focus their priorities around the goal of better communication.

(Slide 2) At the last Chapter, OUR National Fraternity Council (NAFRA) adopted priorities (Vocations, Communications, Relationships)

(Slide 3) What is communication?

By definition: Communication is the **exchange of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.** ...

(Slide 4) Now better yet, let's ask what is **good** communication?

Good communication is the **successful conveying** or sharing of ideas and feelings. As this definition makes clear, communication is more, much more than simply the transmission of information. It needs to be successful.

Why do we need to successfully communicate?

(Slide 5) Can we all agree that "Learning to communicate clearly and reliably with others is an essential tool for developing healthy relationships."?

Without communication, relationships weaken and ultimately wither and die. Don't mean to be melodramatic using words like "wither and die". But think about it. At all levels (local, regional, national, international), everything that our fraternities aim to achieve, can only be done with the help of good communication. How else would we hold gatherings, retreats, Chapters, Quinquennials....? How else would we share information with one another if we do not have a practical, convenient way to communicate?

(Slide 6) What is **good** Franciscan communication?

In addition to an **exchange of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.** ... and a **successful conveying** or sharing of ideas and feelings, may we consider that communication also a **prayerful connection with all our brothers and sisters?**

(Slide 7) "The local fraternity is a visible sign of the Church, a community of faith and love."

Do you remember these words?

Together with all the members who made their profession, WE ALL pledged ourselves to spend our efforts "to make the fraternity a genuine ecclesial assembly and a living Franciscan community". These words come directly from the Rite of Profession in our Ritual. These are the exact words we declared the day of our profession.

(Slide 8) Communication leads to us communing with each other which leads to a stronger healthy bond for a vibrant community.

(Slide 9) What are the vital elements to a vibrant, thriving Fraternity Life?

Our past National Minister, Jan Parker, in a Winter 2018-2019 TAU-USA suggests that Fraternity life must imperatively include: Formation, JPIC, Communications, and Spiritual Assistance

Each of these elements are VITAL to our being and remaining an Order.

(Slide 10) Today, how blessed we all are to be able to, so easily reach out to each other and be connected. We are blessed to have so many tools at our disposition for us to communicate with each other.

Yes, let's consider all this technology a precious blessing.

Franciscans need to communicate by embracing Technology in Times of Necessity and Change.

Our Minister General of the Secular Franciscan Order, Tibor Kauser, OFS, wrote in his 2023 Easter message, "Do not be afraid of using contemporary instruments and tools (to communicate). Share your feelings, your experiences with each other," he wrote. "Make phone calls, write e-mails, short messages, organize videoconferences."

Now, think of your relationship with family members and friends. How do you keep in touch with all your loved ones? Most of you have children, grandchildren, godchildren, nephews and nieces, siblings... with whom you want to nurture a relationship. How do you do that? How has your way of reaching out to them evolved over the years?

Communication is vital to any relationship.

The need for Communication over the years and centuries remains the same, the tools to achieve communication evolve.

What is a **sign** of the **times**? A sign of times is something that shows the kinds of things that are happening, popular, important, etc., in a culture at a particular period in history. We cannot dismiss or ignore the signs of the times.

The way we communicate has evolved greatly over the years:

1866 Telephone (and before that, the Poney Express 😊)

1971 Introduction of Email (that's over 50 years ago!)

1980 Videoconferencing

And recently in 2020 during the Pandemic we experience the Zoom revolution

In an article of the TAU-USA Spring 2020 Issue, John Baldino, OFS explains that Websites, social media presence and communication technology are vital to the success of any organization—especially one that is expected to preach the Gospel.

Websites share schedules, formation materials, prayers, and inspiring words.

Prayers... Franciscans connect and communicate by praying for each other. We are called to not only pray in general for our Franciscan family (let's always remember to pray for the members of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Order) but also share with each other special prayer requests.

How can we pray for each other if we do not know the needs and special requests our brothers and sisters have. We all need to communicate our prayer needs with our fraternity members.

(Slide 11) What kind of useful information you will find on our websites? Want check it out? It is as simple as a click.. or 2 😊

Do you invite your members and your new guests to go and visit our websites?

Can't figure how to navigate the website or connect on Zoom on your own, ask other members in your fraternity, ask your children or grandchildren to help you.

(Slide 12) Your REC has focused on maintaining good methods of communication and implemented new ways over the past years to reach out to you!

- (Click) Each local fraternity is assigned a Councilor, who is a member of the REC to be a liaison between you and the Region
- (Click) Administer our Regional Website and regularly update useful information
- (Click) Published a quarterly newsletter "Our Fraternal Scoop"
- (Click) Offered (and continue to offer) meetings and retreats via Zoom. (What would we have done during all the long months of the Pandemic when we couldn't meet in person?)
- (Click) Constantly update our Database and Regional Directory.
- (Click) Lastly and most importantly, we communicate via Email.

(Slide 13) We have already established that in order to sustain a healthy relationship, we need COMMUNICATION but most importantly, **we need 2-WAY communication**

Email tips:

Why is it important to respond to emails?

Granted not all emails require a reply. Good judgement will dictate when it is appropriate to answer or not. However, if appropriate, it is always appreciated to acknowledge receipt of an email. When you respond, you demonstrate that you care about the sender. It shows that you are attentive to their message.

Again, good judgement will tell you when to respond. Mass emails, not necessary!

If a response is requested, it is very important is to respond in a timely manner. It is considered proper email etiquette to reply to an email within 24 hours after receiving the message. Even more so when the email requests an RSVP.

Unless prompted to do so, please do not “reply to all”, not everyone in a group email needs to receive a dozen of emails with individual questions, or each thank you and each you’re welcome.

Let’s address the issue that many of our fraternities may experience. When a minister is not able to receive or reply to emails for various reasons (old computer or no computer, lack of time, illness, etc...), someone else, ideally the Vice-Minister, or another member of the Council will take on the responsibility to check and respond to emails. Of course, the REC needs to be notified so we all know who are contacts are. Same rule applies to our members in our local fraternity who do not have a computer or an email address. We need to help one another!

We must, all of us must, make efforts to foster better communication in order to nurture our relationships with ALL our brothers and sisters.

(Slide 13) The REC wants to hear from you. Please consider these questions...

First ask yourself:, how is the communication between my local fraternity members? Do all feel a close connection among themselves?

Is my local fraternity council doing their part to make sure that each member of our fraternity is connected and feels united to their brothers and sisters at the local and regional level? (EX: reaching out to shut-ins, calling members who were absent at the last gathering, encouraging members to let the council know when they will be absent, sharing and updating fraternity roster, forwarding emails and making sure members receive information from higher levels, etc...)

Are all the resources mentioned in this presentation, helpful in promoting a fraternal bond in fraternity?

Does each member in your fraternity feel connected to their brothers and sisters at all levels (local, regionals...)? If not, what can we do to help them recognize and value this beautiful gift of our Franciscan Family Connection. How do you plan to promote the upcoming Regional Retreat/Quinquennial? Do all your members know how to access the Regional website? Did all your members get the opportunity to read “Our Franciscan Scoop”? Do all the professed members and candidates in your fraternity receive the TAU-USA?

Communication, communion and community are **essential for health, happiness, relationships, teamwork and life.**

We were never meant to be isolated and alone. We were made for connection and relationships. Accordingly, our communication channel must be preserved, protected. If we fail to do so, separation from the rest of our Order will result.