

Glance into the Future

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Jeremiah 29:11

As you journey more deeply into shaping your future, we are asking you to prepare a *letter*. This letter will be shared at the upcoming gathering and later in small groups in order to enkindle your spirits and provide food for the journey. This letter will likely be shared in the months and years to come as you engage in ongoing visioning and your Journey of Transformation.

We hope that you will consider this letter as one of the most important letters you will ever write, that the shaping of your very future depends on it. We ask that you take this invitation into prayer and let it ripen, pouring new wine into new wineskins, until you are sure of what you want to say. Take it down into the depths of your soul and speak of your deepest longings for the future of your community.

We have been engaged in a planning and visioning process for some time exploring what we might create. In the initial assemblies with Ted and Beth, you were introduced to the possibilities of transformation and a way of visioning that builds upon our prior work, incorporates strategic planning, and invites us to discern God’s call to new life as we shape our future together. We want this next phase of our work (preparing for Chapter and beyond) to build upon our prayerful reflections. Where do you imagine we are being led as a congregation? Having listened to the dreams of the future from some of our sisters, what are yours?

In the spirit of our Franciscan-Clarian Spirituality of gazing, considering, contemplating, and imitating, we invite you to an Emmaus journey with Jesus and a cherished ancestor of your choice (Francis, Clare, Mother Teresa ...). For example, if you choose to pray with Francis, ask what he sees for you in the depths of his soul. Consider these questions and have a contemplative conversation:

What are his deepest desires for you as a member?

Through the eyes of Francis, how might you grow in 10 years from now?

How will you continue to witness your mission and charism?

What values will community life offer?

In his heart-of-hearts, how does he hope this journey will transform you?

Continue to pray with Jesus as you walk together on the road to Emmaus.

Note your thoughts and reflections and when you are ready, write a letter to your members as if you are projecting 10 years into the future. Write as if you are the voice of the one you chose to pray with, or use your own voice, having taken his or hers into your heart. From the depths of your soul include your deepest longings. Tell your members what you see as the future of your community 10 years from now.

Write your letter out of unwavering faith, audacious hope and most especially with love for your members, associates, companions in mission and a wounded world in need of your charism.

[Process for FSA Gathering 2024 – May 22, 2024]