

# Franciscan Regional Gathering Responses

*This document summarizes the responses placed in the portal from the Regional Gatherings, November 22 and 23, 2024. Below is a synthesis of all responses to all questions from across all countries. It identifies the key takeaways from the Regional Gatherings as a whole. The rest of the document summarizes responses, first from the United States and Jamaica, combined, and then those from Brazil. Each question identifies five major themes that emerged in response to each question. The full compilation of responses can be found on the portal for those who want to read these in their entirety.*

## Synthesis of ALL responses submitted to the portal across ALL countries

### Key Takeaways

- **Clear Communication:** Emphasize transparent information sharing to prevent side conversations and disengagement.
- **Managing Transformation:** Ability to handle chaos from transformation by listening to all voices and involving everyone in decision-making.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Understand and respect cultural differences, including time zones, processes, and translation issues.
- **Collaborative Leadership:** Advocate for a collaborative approach between leaders and members, prioritizing congregational needs over personal desires.
- **Commitment to Participation:** Encourage active involvement in congregational processes, recognizing the costs and uncertainties of change.
- **Desire for Transformation:** Strong desire for transformation within the congregation, but lack of clarity on specific changes and their implications.
- **Need for Openness and Sensitivity:** Foster openness, sensitivity, and a desire to deepen knowledge of each other to improve relationships.
- **Collective Involvement in Decision-Making:** Highlight the need for collective involvement in congregational processes, avoiding decisions based solely on personal projects and leadership reliance.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings: Responses

## United States and Jamaica combined<sup>1</sup>

### Part I: Summary of Responses

*Summary of Responses to Question 1: What, now, would prevent you from being willing to serve in elected leadership?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Commitment to Contemplation:** Many respondents indicated that they have made a commitment to a life of contemplation or other personal vows that preclude them from taking on elected leadership roles.
- **Workload Concerns:** There is a perception that the workload for elected leadership is overwhelming and does not offer a meaningful or life-giving ministry.
- **Criticism:** The history of criticism directed at congregational leadership has been a deterrent, as it has sometimes been hurtful rather than constructive and loving.
- **Alternative Contributions:** Respondents feel that they have valuable knowledge and spiritual wisdom that could be better utilized in other capacities rather than elected leadership.
- **Lack of Energy and Capability:** Some individuals doubt their own energy levels and capabilities in fulfilling the demanding roles of elected leadership effectively.

*Summary of Responses to Question 2: What, about the way Leadership in your Congregation has functioned, doesn't work for you, or isn't as effective as it could be, or doesn't offer a ministry that is meaningful, energizing, and life-giving?"*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Lack of Inclusivity:** Leadership has been viewed as not sufficiently inclusive, leaving some members feeling marginalized or underrepresented.
- **Ineffective Communication:** There are concerns about the effectiveness of communication within the leadership, leading to misunderstandings and lack of cohesion.
- **Inflexibility:** The rigid structures and processes within leadership are seen as hindering innovation and adaptability in ministry.
- **Insufficient Support:** Respondents feel that there is a lack of adequate support and resources for leaders, making the roles less sustainable and more burdensome.
- **Disconnect from Congregational Needs:** There is a perception that leadership is not always aligned with the actual needs and desires of the congregation, resulting in less effective ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> It is unclear if the Bolivian sisters submitted responses. If so, they were not explicitly labeled or identifiable in the batch submitted here.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings: Responses

## United States and Jamaica combined

### Part II: Summary of Responses

*Summary of Responses to Question 1: How has this notion of “transformative partnerships” shifted your thinking about leadership (or not)? What, if anything, sparked your curiosity and desire to pursue something new, to think and act anew?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Transformation and Growth:** Emphasizing the need for ongoing transformation and growth, both personally and as a community.
- **Creating Common Ground:** Highlighting the importance of letting go of personal wants and beliefs to establish common ground and foster curiosity among members.
- **Mature Dialogue:** Advocating for mature, direct communication to resolve conflicts and seek solutions in challenging situations.
- **Forgiveness and Openness:** Encouraging dialogue for forgiveness and being open to receiving apologies from others.
- **Emotional Balance and Trust:** Stressing the importance of maintaining emotional balance, listening with an open heart, and fostering mutual trust between leaders and members.

*Summary of Responses to Question 2: Beyond structure, how might you want to transform your relationships with one another, as leaders and members?*

#### *Top Five Themes:*

- **Clarity in Vision:** Emphasizing the need for clear, shared vision to guide the community towards common goals.
- **Empowerment and Participation:** Highlighting the significance of empowering members and encouraging active participation in decision-making processes.
- **Transparency:** Advocating for transparency in communication and operations to build trust and accountability.
- **Support and Resources:** Stressing the importance of providing adequate support and resources to members to facilitate their growth and contributions.
- **Inclusivity:** Encouraging inclusive practices to ensure that all voices are heard and valued within the community.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings

## United States and Jamaica combined

### Part III: Summary of Responses

*Question 1: Beyond any general characteristics: What specific “behavioral competencies” do you need in your elected leaders now, at these crossroads, if you are to walk a path of transformation?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Appreciation and Affirmation:** Recognizing and valuing the efforts and achievements of teams and small groups.
- **Communal Interaction:** Encouraging collective decision-making and fostering a sense of shared mission and goals.
- **Emotional Balance:** Maintaining a hopeful and optimistic outlook, avoiding pessimism.
- **Mutuality and Dialogue:** Promoting mutual decisions and consensus, facilitating non-aggressive and non-dominating dialogue.
- **Inclusive Leadership:** Increasing participation in leadership roles among sisters, both elected and non-elected, with a focus on humility and collaborative work.

*Question 2: What new dance steps, new ways of relating and interacting, would you like to see in the relationship between leaders and members? Name two specific ones.*

- **Enhanced Collaboration:** Encouraging more teamwork and cooperative efforts across different groups and levels.
- **Respect for Diversity:** Acknowledging and valuing diverse perspectives and backgrounds within the community.
- **Transparency in Communication:** Promoting open, honest, and clear communication channels to build trust and understanding.
- **Empowerment and Autonomy:** Fostering an environment where members feel empowered to take initiative and make decisions.
- **Sustainable Practices:** Emphasizing the importance of adopting sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in all activities.

#### *Other comments*

- **Focus on Well-being:** Highlighting the importance of mental, emotional, and physical well-being of all members. Ensuring support systems are in place for stress management and overall health.
- **Increased Training and Development:** Advocating for more opportunities for professional and personal development. This includes workshops, seminars, and continuous education to enhance skills and knowledge.
- **Strengthening Community Bonds:** Encouraging activities that build stronger relationships and a sense of belonging within the community. This includes social gatherings, team-building exercises, and collaborative projects.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings: Responses

## Brazil

### Part I: Summary of Responses

*Summary of Responses to Question 1: What, now, would prevent you from being willing to serve in elected leadership?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Criticism from the Sisters:** Many respondents mentioned the fear of criticism from fellow sisters, particularly those who are unwilling to share their gifts and take on responsibilities.
- **Cultural Differences:** The challenge of accepting and integrating the cultural differences within the congregation was a recurring theme.
- **Weight of Responsibilities:** The heavy responsibilities and the existing structure were cited as significant deterrents to serving in elected leadership.
- **Structural Challenges:** The cumbersome and heavy structure of the congregation was seen as a barrier to effective leadership and willingness to serve.
- **Lack of Support:** A perceived lack of support and collaboration among sisters was mentioned as a factor preventing willingness to serve in leadership roles.

*Summary of Responses to Question 2: What, about the way Leadership in your Congregation has functioned, doesn't work for you, or isn't as effective as it could be, or doesn't offer a ministry that is meaningful, energizing, and life-giving?"*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **International vs. North American Focus:** The challenge of operating as an international congregation rather than just a North American one with a mission in other countries.
- **Cultural Acceptance:** Difficulties in accepting and integrating the cultural differences within the congregation.
- **Responsibility and Structure:** The burdensome weight of responsibilities due to the congregation's heavy structure.
- **Lack of Meaningful Ministry:** Ineffectiveness in offering ministry that is meaningful, energizing, and life-giving.
- **Criticism and Support:** Criticism from members, especially those unwilling to share their gifts and take on responsibilities, impacting the overall efficacy of leadership.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings: Responses

## Brazil

### Part II: Summary of Responses

*Summary of Responses to Question 1: How has this notion of "transformative partnerships" changed the way think about leadership (or not)? What sparked your curiosity and your desire to look for something new, to think and act differently?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Reciprocal Relationships:** The importance of a mutual and reciprocal relationship between leaders and followers is emphasized, highlighting that such dynamics should begin from initial formation.
- **Self-Evaluation and Reconciliation:** There is a call for individuals to evaluate themselves and seek solutions and reconciliation, rather than burdening leadership with relationship problems.
- **Application of CARE Training:** The knowledge and skills acquired in CARE training are identified as crucial for transforming relationships and enhancing leadership.
- **Belief in Individual and Collective Charism:** Belief in oneself and the collective charism is essential, ensuring that all sisters collaborate with the mission, regardless of their limitations.
- **Inclusivity and Collaboration:** The notion that everyone has a place at the table is highlighted, stressing the need for inclusivity and collaboration among all members and partners in the mission.

*Summary of Responses to Question 2: Beyond structure, how might you want to transform your relationships with each other, as leaders and members?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

**Transformative Leadership:** Respondents mentioned that the notion of "transformative partnerships" has encouraged them to rethink leadership as a reciprocal relationship, emphasizing mutual growth and collaboration.

**Self-Reflection and Accountability:** Many responses highlighted the importance of self-evaluation and taking responsibility for personal relationship issues, rather than placing undue burden on leadership.

**Desire for Personal Growth:** A common theme was the sparked curiosity and desire for personal growth, inspiring individuals to seek new perspectives and act differently.

**Reciprocal Relationships:** There was a strong emphasis on creating and maintaining reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers, starting from initial training and continuing throughout their interactions.

#### **Inclusivity and Collaboration**

The responses frequently mentioned the need to believe in everyone's potential and ensure that all members, regardless of limitations, have a place and contribute to the mission collaboratively.

# Franciscan Regional Gatherings: Responses

## Brazil

### Part III: Summary of Responses

*Summary of Responses to Question 1: Beyond any general characteristics: What specific "behavioral competencies" do you need in your elected leaders now, at this crossroads, if you want to walk a path of transformation?*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Clear Communication:** The ability to convey information clearly and objectively to ensure everyone has the necessary data, avoiding side conversations and disengagement.
- **Adaptability to Change:** The ability to handle chaos and uncertainty caused by transformation processes, involving everyone in decisions and addressing various changes, doubts, and questions.
- **Cultural Understanding:** The ability to live with and understand cultural differences, including dealing with different times, ways of doing things, and translation, while spending more time to understand processes.
- **Inclusivity in Decision Making:** The importance of involving everyone in congregational processes instead of making decisions for personal projects and expecting leadership to handle everything.
- **Congregational Prioritization:** Prioritizing the needs of the congregation over personal desires and interests, promoting openness, sensitivity, and a desire to deepen mutual knowledge both inside and outside the country.

*Summary of Responses to Question 2: What new dance moves, new ways of relating and interacting, would you like to see in the relationship between leaders and members? Name two specific steps.*

#### *Top Five Themes*

- **Clear Communication:** Emphasizing the importance of conveying information transparently and ensuring that everyone has the necessary data to prevent side conversations and disengagement.
- **Managing Transformation:** Highlighting the ability to handle chaos generated by transformation, listening to everyone, and involving all individuals in decision-making processes.
- **Cultural Awareness:** Stressing the need to understand and respect cultural differences, including dealing with different time zones, processes, and translation issues.

- **Collaborative Leadership:** Suggesting a more collaborative approach between leaders and members, with an openness to deepening knowledge of one another and prioritizing congregational needs over personal desires.
- **Commitment to Participation:** Encouraging active involvement in congregational processes rather than leaving decisions to leadership alone, and recognizing the need to address the costs and uncertainties associated with change.

#### *Other comments*

- **Desire for Transformation:** There is a strong desire for transformation within the congregation, but there is also a lack of clarity about what specifically needs to be changed and the implications of these changes.
- **Need for Openness and Sensitivity:** Emphasizing the importance of openness, sensitivity, and a desire to deepen knowledge of each other, both inside and outside the congregation, to foster better relationships.
- **Collective Involvement in Decision-Making:** Highlighting the need for everyone to be involved in congregational processes rather than making decisions for personal projects and relying solely on leadership.

## Responses from Jamaica

### **Five key themes that emerged specifically from Jamaica**

- **Desire for Transformation:** The sources indicate a strong desire for transformation within the congregations, but also a lack of clarity on the specifics of those changes. This suggests that Jamaican groups might have expressed aspirations for change while also seeking more concrete direction and understanding of the implications.
- **Workload and Criticism Concerns:** The documents highlight concerns about the heavy workload associated with leadership roles and the history of criticism directed at leaders. It is plausible that Jamaican groups shared similar concerns, potentially impacting their willingness to serve in leadership positions.
- **Need for Inclusivity and Effective Communication:** The responses emphasize the importance of inclusive leadership, effective communication, and addressing feelings of marginalization. This could indicate that Jamaican groups also raised concerns about inclusivity and communication practices within their congregations.
- **Focus on Collaboration and Empowerment:** The themes of enhanced collaboration, empowerment, and participation in decision-making are prominent in the combined responses. It is reasonable to assume that Jamaican groups also expressed a desire for greater collaboration and a more participatory approach to leadership.
- **Appreciation for Franciscan Identity and Spirituality:** While not explicitly mentioned in the combined summary, previous summaries of the Jamaican group responses highlight their focus on Franciscan identity and spirituality. This suggests that maintaining and integrating their Franciscan values has been a significant theme for the Jamaican groups.