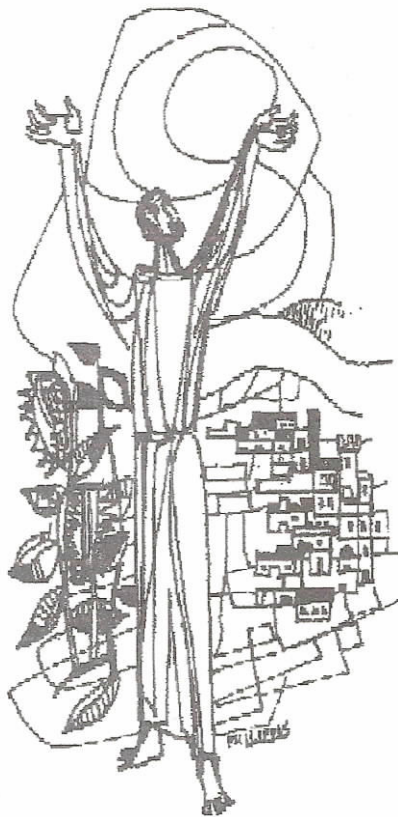


# Revised **HANDBOOK**

**for  
SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE  
to the  
Secular Franciscan Order**

*CNSA*



*Conference of National Spiritual Assistants  
USA*

*2012*

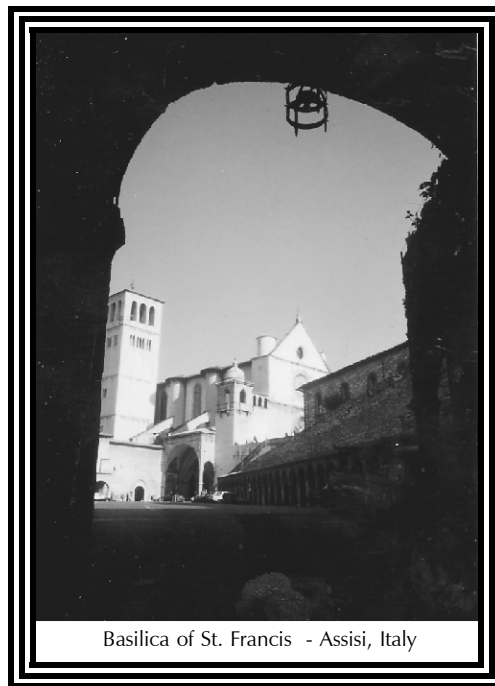


# **HANDBOOK**

for  
**Spiritual Assistance  
to the  
Secular Franciscan Order**

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*OFS = Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis*



Basilica of St. Francis - Assisi, Italy

**Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA)**

United States of America

**2012**

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*Bob Brady OFM - Stephen Gross OFM Conv - Kevin Queally TOR - Lester Bach OFM Cap*

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to the Secular Franciscan Order  
USA***

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Revised in in 2005

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA)

Loren Connell OFM - Stephen Gross OFM Conv - Kevin Queally TOR - Lester Bach OFM Cap

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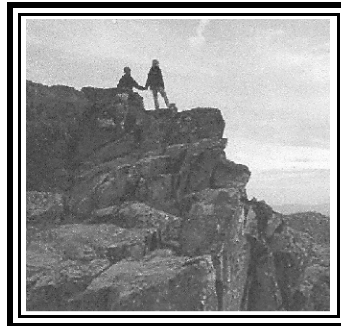
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***OFS = Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis***



*Unless you try to do something beyond  
what you have already mastered,  
you will never grow.*

+++

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## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE - REFLECTIONS

Two elements come together in the term *spiritual assistance*. The role of a spiritual assistant is both *spiritual*, i.e. guiding people in gospel living; and *assistance*, indicating that we "assist" people in living the Rule of the OFS. SA's are NOT: *directors* i.e. giving orders; not *dictators*, i.e. running the whole program; not *experts*, i.e. having answers for everything. *Spiritual assistants maintain the link between the Franciscan family members*. The role of a spiritual assistant is to *collaborate with* secular Franciscans in order that the OFS fulfills its role in the Church and the world. We collaborate with local, regional, national and international councils. The OFS is assisted by spiritual assistants (Friars or others) who serve the fraternities. Secular Franciscans and their councils assume responsibility for the growth and development of the OFS. A spiritual assistant is part of the council and collaborates in enriching secular Franciscan life through servant-leadership at the different levels.

The role of the First Order and the Third Order Regular (TOR) is spelled out in the General Constitutions of the OFS (2000):

*2. The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the responsibility, above all, of their general and provincial ministers. The **altius moderamen** (higher direction), of which canon 303 speaks, belongs to them. The purpose of the **altius moderamen** is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 85.2

*... associations whose members live in the world but share in the spirit of some religious institute, under the "higher direction (Altius moderamen)" of the same institute, and who lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection, are known as third orders, or some other suitable title (Such as OFS - Ordo Franciscanus Secularis).*

Canon 303

*The Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS (2009) offer another way of expressing the First Order/TOR responsibility to the OFS for spiritual assistance:*

*1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, in virtue of its belonging to the same spiritual family, is entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.*

*2. Religious and Secular Franciscans in fact, in various ways and forms but **in life-giving union with each other**, aim to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church and of society.*

*3. Therefore, as a concrete sign of **communion and co-responsibility**, religious superiors must assure spiritual assistance to all the fraternities of the OFS.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 1.1, .2, .3

*1. The spiritual and pastoral care is provided as a two-fold service:*

- a) the fraternal office of **altius moderamen** on the part of the major superiors;*
- b) spiritual assistance to the fraternities and their councils.*

*2. The purpose of the **altius moderamen** is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and (life-giving) union with the Franciscan family.*

Ibid - Article 2.1, .2

The words: *co-responsibility* and *life-giving union* invite spiritual assistants to work with the secular Franciscans as equals rather than through domination. *Life-giving union* requires a true familial sense, working together to achieve the goal of the Franciscan family both in the Church and in the world.

The SA statutes clarify the role of spiritual assistants when they state:

*3. The purpose of spiritual assistance is to foster communion with the Church and the Franciscan family through witness and sharing of Franciscan spirituality, to cooperate in the initial and ongoing formation of secular Franciscans and to express fraternal affection of the religious towards the OFS.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 2.3

*1. The spiritual assistant is the person designated by the competent major superior to carry out this service for a specific fraternity of the OFS and of the Franciscan Youth.*

*3. The spiritual assistant is by right a voting member of the council and of the chapter of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities. Only in economic matters and in elections does he or she **not** enjoy the right to vote.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 12.1, .3

As we develop a job description of the Spiritual Assistant, we adjust it to fit the different levels of the OFS administrative structure. There is always the "how" of implementing these articles at the different levels. But the basic role of the spiritual assistant is consistent. SA's are part of a Franciscan family that embraces the same charism and follows the same spirit shown by St. Francis of Assisi. We support all the members of the Franciscan family, assisting them to embrace a *life-giving union* that enables us to express, together, the spirit of Francis and Clare in the Church and the world. "How" we implement that spirit may differ at various times and at various levels, but the foundation is the same. A spiritual assistant is the supportive link between the OFS and the rest of the Franciscan family.

Spiritual assistants need to understand their role in fraternity life and with the council. They are not simply a passive presence nor are they an overwhelming, aggressive presence. Like all council members, they share whatever will build up fraternity life and the Franciscan charism.

*1. The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the secular Franciscans.*

*2. In the Council of the fraternity and in elective and ordinary chapters, the assistant will be respectful of the responsibilities and role of the secular Franciscans, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the fraternity.*

*3. The Assistant participates actively and votes in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or by the chapter. He or she is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during the meetings of the Council or Chapter.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 13.1, .2, .3

\* Remember the caveat in the Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - article 12.3: *Only in economic matters and in elections does he or she* (friar, clergy, religious or laity) **not** *enjoy the right to vote* \*

How a spiritual assistant is appointed and *who* may be appointed are important elements to understand. A spiritual assistant is NOT appointed by the local fraternity. He or she is ordinarily not appointed by the bishop of the diocese. A departing spiritual assistant does NOT appoint his/her successor. The Statutes spell out quite clearly both *who* has the authority to appoint spiritual assistants and *who may be appointed* to that role.

*1. The Assistant is appointed by the **competent major superior**, after consultation with the council of the fraternity concerned.*

*2. Where more than one major superior of the same Order is involved in the appointment of an Assistant, the norms established jointly by the superiors with jurisdiction in the territory should be followed.*

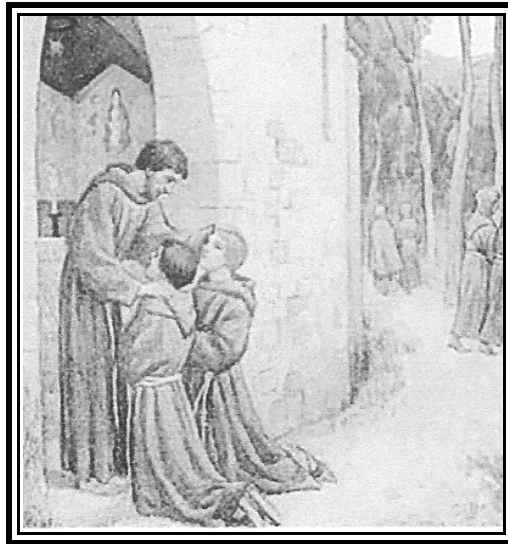
3. *The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a limited time, which accumulated **cannot be more than twelve years.***

4. *When it is not possible to give the fraternity a spiritual assistant who is a member of the First Order or the TOR, the competent major superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:*

- + *religious brothers or sisters of other Franciscan institutes;*
- + *secular Franciscans, cleric or lay, specially prepared for such service;*
- + *other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 15.1, .2, .3, .4

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*Wherever the brothers may be and in whatever place they meet,  
they should respect spiritually and attentively one another,  
and honor one another without complaining.  
Let them be careful not to appear outwardly  
as sad or gloomy hypocrites,  
but show themselves joyful, cheerful  
and consistently gracious in the Lord*

*The Earlier Rule*  
Francis of Assisi - The Saint - Vol 1 - Page 69



## THE ROLE OF MAJOR RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS

When we address the issue of *who* appoints spiritual assistants, we look to the **major religious superior**. The major religious superior at local and regional levels is the Minister Provincial of the 1st Order or the TOR to whose Province a particular fraternity is bonded. It is the 1st Order/TOR Province which established the fraternity, or to whom the fraternity was transferred. That particular province has the *Altius moderamen* for the fraternity.

The Minister Provincial may delegate a friar of his province to deal with matters pertaining to the OFS. This friar is known as the **Provincial Spiritual Assistant** (PSA). The Minister Provincial determines the extent of the delegation of authority to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant. Ordinarily the PSA is given authority to deal with issues dealing with the OSF fraternities bonded to his province. This includes appointing a spiritual assistant to a local fraternity bonded to his province or to a regional fraternity when his province has fraternities in the region (cf. Article 88.5 of the OFS General Constitutions - below)

The General Constitutions of the OFS list the responsibilities of a Major superior:

1. *The provincial ministers and the other major superiors, in the area of their own jurisdiction, guarantee the spiritual assistance to the local fraternities entrusted to their jurisdiction. They see to it that their own religious are interested in the OFS and that **capable and well-prepared persons are appointed** for the service of spiritual assistance.*
2. *It is the specific competence of the major superiors, in the name of their jurisdiction:*
  - a) *to establish, canonically, new local fraternities and guarantee them spiritual assistance;*
  - b) *to animate spiritually and visit the local fraternities assisted by their own jurisdiction;*
  - c) *to keep themselves informed on the spiritual assistance given to the OFS.*
3. *The major superiors are responsible for the spiritual assistance to the local fraternities they have established.*
4. *The major superiors with jurisdiction in the same territory, are to establish together the most adequate means to guarantee spiritual assistance to local fraternities which, because of causes beyond their control, could remain without such assistance.*
5. *The major superiors with jurisdiction in the same territory, are to establish together the most adequate means for carrying out collegially their mission with respect to the regional and national fraternities of the OFS.*

General Constitutions of the OFS - Article 88.1, .2, .3, .4, .5

The Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS continue to spell out the responsibilities of General and Provincial major superiors. These responsibilities are frequently fulfilled by appointing general, national, regional or local spiritual assistants either personally or through their delegate.

1. *The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan 1st Order and the TOR, is the duty above all of their general and provincial ministers.*
2. *They exercise their office through:*
  - + *the establishment of local fraternities;*
  - + *pastoral visits;*
  - + *spiritual assistance.*

*They may exercise this office personally or through a delegate (e.g. PSA).*

3. *The Franciscan major superiors remain responsible for the quality of spiritual assistance and pastoral care, even in those cases where previous approval from a religious superior or from the local Ordinary*

*is needed to appoint the Assistant* (E.g. when the appointee is a diocesan priest or deacon or belongs to another Franciscan province).

*4. They should foster the formation and interest of their own religious in the OFS and ensure a specific preparation for the Assistants so that they will be suitable and well-prepared.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 5.1, .2, .3, .4

Responsibilities regarding establishing fraternities, transferring fraternities to another province, or making the pastoral visits will be covered in another part of this *Handbook*. The ministry of Regional, National or International spiritual assistants can be found in the appropriate sections of this *Handbook*. Regional, National and General (International) spiritual assistants, appointed by their major superiors, do the pastoral visits at the appropriate level - to local, regional, national or international fraternities.

*\* ... the general ministers ... say that "the work of spiritual assistance, less far-reaching today in the area of direction and organization, can and must be more profound, as spiritual accompaniment and help in the formation of brothers and sisters." Recognition of the responsibility of the seculars must not be transformed into a passive attitude of "leave it to them," but must be an active attitude of promotion and collaboration so that the seculars might realize their vocation and proper mission.*

*The goal of "life-giving union with each other" requires the removal, at all levels, of certain obstacles. These lie in a mentality that has been overcome, but whose roots are still deep. To go from one form of accompanying the Secular Franciscans to another is always hard:*

- + from "director" to "assistant - (spiritual assistance, guidance by the "good shepherd" and not direction);*
- + from "commanding" to "serving;"*
- + from being "Father" who has the last word (even though there is only one Father in heaven!) to being a member who collaborates with the council and its minister and should not substitute for them.*

Manual of the General Spiritual Assistants - Chapter iv - #2.1

**\* 2.2.1 Obstacles on the part of the seculars:**

- + insufficient awareness of the dignity of laity in the Church;*
- + limited knowledge of the true identity of the Secular Franciscans;*
- + "affective" dependence on the friar;*
- + mistaken "reverence" for religious, even in areas that have nothing to do with their status and role;*
- + idealization of the figure of the religious and fierce criticism when their limitations and weaknesses are perceived.*

**\* 2.2.2 Obstacles on the part of religious:**

- + an "esprit de corps" with regard to one's own Order, even when convinced of the unity of the OFS;*
- + a tendency to pursue and impose one's own idea of the OFS instead of an awareness that the OFS has its own identity;*
- + a fear of losing the limelight if responsibilities are shared with Seculars.*

Manual of the General Spiritual Assistants - Chapter iv - #2.2.1, 2.2.2

\*\*\*

*... I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me ... that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned - however much he could have sinned - who, after looking into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy ... love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord.*

Letter to a Minister  
Francis of Assisi, The Saint - Vol 1 - Page 97



## JOB DESCRIPTION - SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

The role of a spiritual assistant is important. He/she is the link between the OFS and the 1st Order and TOR. *This relationship is required by the Church.* The spiritual assistant has other responsibilities as well. Here are some of the basic qualities/responsibilities of a **spiritual assistant**.

1. A spiritual assistant must be knowledgeable about Franciscan spirituality as well as understanding the secular Franciscan way of life. Lacking this knowledge would make it difficult for an individual to truly "assist" as a spiritual assistant to a secular Franciscan fraternity.
2. A spiritual assistant needs skills in communicating Franciscan spirituality to the fraternity members and serving the fraternity council. Without this skill, it is difficult to see how a spiritual assistant could give much "assistance" to the fraternity. A spiritual assistant also needs basic "people skills." One way the PSA discovers the presence or absence of people skills is by a personal interview with a nominee.
3. A local spiritual assistant needs time and the ability to co-operate in *initial and ongoing formation* of secular Franciscans. It requires presence at *initial formation* sessions, and the monthly gatherings where *ongoing formation* takes place. His presence is required at the regular fraternity council meetings. Obviously, he/she does not do all the work, but his/her presence is important to developing ways and means of contributing to fraternity life. Attendance at *SA/OFS ongoing formation* workshops is one way for SAs to keep up-to-date.
4. A spiritual assistant participates actively in council meetings and may vote on issues. This requires presence at the regular meetings of the fraternity council. *The spiritual assistant does **not** have a vote in economic matters nor in elections* - even if he or she is a secular Franciscan.
5. A spiritual assistant "assists" the secular Franciscans in living the OFS Rule. An SA needs to be a prayerful person. He/she needs prayerful experiences that enable him/her to assist Seculars to *let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do* (OFS Rule #8). The spiritual assistant needs sound knowledge of social issues in order to proclaim the Gospel by word **and** action in the world and the Church as the OFS Rule requires. (cf. OFS Rule #14, 15, 16 17, 18, 19)
6. A spiritual assistant must understand how a OFS fraternity fits within the Franciscan family, the People of God called "Church," and how it serves society. He/she must realize that they serve the 1st Order and TOR, maintaining a *life-giving union* with all Franciscan family members.
7. A spiritual assistant is responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations. The SA offers spiritual reflections, as seem reasonable, at monthly council meetings and fraternity gatherings. This requires *collaboration* with the seculars in these areas. *The spiritual assistant does **not** do all the work.* He/she enables others to share good ways of animating liturgical celebrations in the fraternity.
8. A local spiritual assistant communicates with the *regional* spiritual assistant(s), keeping the regional spiritual assistant(s) informed about issues in a local fraternity that need to be addressed on a regional level. Regional gatherings for spiritual assistants expect his/her physical presence. Local spiritual assistants should be present at fraternal and pastoral visitations of the local fraternity. The local Spiritual assistant is to be present at the Regional Chapter gatherings.
9. *However, for spiritual assistants to the Secular Franciscans, the role of pastor is better described by the title "spiritual assistant." Assistant, from the Latin verb "adsistere," means to stand beside, to stand near, to be present, to protect, to support, to help by means of one's own active participation. An assistant is one who is called, because of his or her competence, to help the person in charge or chief officer, who, in the case of the OFS, is **the council with the minister** at the various levels.*





## QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

### 1. Who can be appointed as a spiritual assistant to a local fraternity?

The following people may be appointed. In all cases there is a presumption that they are or will become *suitable and well-prepared* for their role. *Ordination is NOT required.*

- + Friars of the 1st Order or TOR
- + Religious brothers and sisters of other Franciscan institutes
- + Secular Franciscans, cleric or lay, well prepared for such service. (Professed for at least five years)
- + Other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious, *well prepared* for such service.

Appointees must understand the role of a spiritual assistant, be well-prepared, able and willing to fulfill the role of a SA. OFS members and other non-friars are expected to take the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course (cf. Page 14 in this *Handbook*) as their preparation for the role of spiritual assistant. OFS members who are recommended to be a spiritual assistant should **be perpetually professed for at least five years**. Friar appointees and other religious are urged to take the *Franciscan Family Connections* course or *at least* to read the book.

### 2. Who makes this appointment?

Local fraternities are bonded to a province of the 1st Order or the TOR. This province established the fraternity or it was transferred to them by the Minister Provincial of another province. The major superior is the Minister Provincial of this Province who often delegates a friar to serve as *Provincial Spiritual Assistant* to the OFS. The PSA then takes care of issues relating to the OFS. The *Provincial Spiritual Assistant* makes the appointment of a *local* spiritual assistant in consultation with the concerned fraternity council. Provincials (or PSAs) with fraternities in a region may appoint *Regional* SA's after consultation with the Regional executive council.

### 3. What is the process for requesting a spiritual assistant for a local fraternity?

The local council may recommend one or more individuals. They send name(s) and a resume' to the Minister Provincial or the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the province to which the fraternity is bonded (This Province has the *Altius moderamen*). The fraternity council must be certain that the individual is, or can become, *suitable and well-prepared* for the role of SA. Nominees take the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course to prepare to become a spiritual assistant. If a friar is not available, other individuals may fill the role of spiritual assistant (cf. #1 above). If a monthly gathering of appointees with the mentor(s) is possible, it is the preferred way to conduct the training program. **NB: The FFC course provides training for both *local and regional* spiritual assistants.** Local SA's taking the course need not answer questions designed for nominees for regional SAs.

We strongly recommend that nominees for spiritual assistance take the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course. It is a 19-month long correspondence course. We encourage friars and non-friars to take the course or, *at least*, to read *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011). Application is made to the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the Province to which the local fraternity is bonded. (cf. Pages i - iv in the FFC book for more information). The mentor is the appropriate PSA or someone he delegates.

After consultation with the Council, the PSA may accept a nominee. The PSA appoints the nominee when assured that the candidate has successfully finished the training course and is well-prepared to be a competent spiritual assistant. In those parts of the country where lay spiritual assistants represent the best option, means and resources for *training in pastoral ministry skills* need to be made available as a way to supplement the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course.

**NB: A regional council follows these same guidelines when requesting a regional spiritual assistant.**

#### **4. What happens after the appointment is made?**

When the PSA appoints an individual as spiritual assistant to a particular fraternity, the nominee receives a **letter of appointment** from the PSA or Minister provincial of the Province to which the specific local fraternity is bonded.

The appointment is for no more than 12 years. At the end of the 12 year period a new spiritual assistant must be sought. Major superiors or their delegate may also appoint spiritual assistants for a chapter term, i.e. 3 or 4 years at a time, until the 12 year limit is reached. It is the role of the PSA to make the decision about such matters and inform SAs of this process. No one serves as SA to the same fraternity for longer than 12 consecutive years.

There is a **liturgical ritual** which can be used to **install the spiritual assistant**. The ritual is on page 30 in this *Handbook*. OFS councils can adjust the ritual to meet local, regional or national needs.

#### **5. What if the spiritual assistant fails in his/her responsibilities? What do we do?**

Since human choices are not infallible, it can happen that a spiritual assistant is not really "assisting" the fraternity. Removal should not be easily sought unless there are serious reasons.

The Gospel requires us to try first to address the situation through *dialogue* between the local council (Council & Minister)) and the spiritual assistant. Sometimes this clarifies issues and ends the problem. Or a spiritual assistant may realize that he/she can no longer serve and resigns. If the spiritual assistant or the fraternity council refuse to *dialogue* nothing is achieved except the suffering of the fraternity. A facilitator from a higher level can be asked to assist in the process.

The process in the General Constitutions of the OFS, apply to a local minister (Below). It might also be applied to a spiritual assistant. But **only the PSA or the Provincial minister** (not the council of the higher level) **has authority to remove a spiritual assistant**. If dialogue breaks down, appeal is made directly to the PSA or minister Provincial of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded. (cf. "Comment" below).

*1. In the case in which the minister does not fulfill his or her duties, the council concerned manifests its concerns in a fraternal dialogue with the minister. If this does not produce positive results, the council should inform the council of the higher level whose competence it is to examine the case and, if needed, by secret ballot, decide to remove the minister.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 84.1

**Comment:** None of this should begin unless there are serious, public, and proven reasons for such action (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 84.2 & .4). It is a difficult situation. It requires both due process and prayerful contemplation. The OFS Rule and the Gospel require that we respect one another throughout the process. We seek what is best both for the OFS, the fraternity, and the individual involved. Mediation is ultimately guided by the Minister Provincial or PSA. If other help is needed they can select people who are not part of the Franciscan family. Only the Minister Provincial or PSA can remove a SA.

***No fraternity council at any level has the authority to appoint a spiritual assistant nor does it have the authority to remove a spiritual assistant.*** As indicated in *Article 84 of the OFS General Constitutions*, dialogue with the individual is the first step. After dialogue, appeal can be made to the REC who then reports their decision to the appropriate Provincial or PSA for mediation, sharing whatever has already been done. Only the Provincial or PSA has the authority to retain or dismiss an SA who is failing in his/her duties. The concerned SA has the right of appeal to the minister provincial or a higher major superior of the 1st Order or TOR. The major superior then makes a decision from the evidence presented.

To maintain an attitude of respect and reverence for one another is not easy in these situations. But it is part of our Franciscan charism to do so. Those involved may find reasons for personal conversions. As far as possible, avoid *either/or* battles. Seek *both/and* decisions that maintain a level of relationship.



## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT AND THE *LOCAL COUNCIL*

*This service (as spiritual assistant) of the religious ministers completes but does not substitute for the secular councils and ministers to whom belong the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the fraternities at the various levels.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 86.2

*The spiritual assistant is by right a voting member of the council and of the chapter of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities. Only in economic matters and in elections at any level does he or she not enjoy the right to vote.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 12.3

*The assistant participates **actively** and votes in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or by the Chapter. He or she is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during the meetings of the Council or of the Chapter.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 13.3

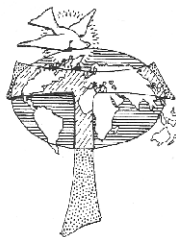
These texts make it clear how important it is for a spiritual assistant to understand what *collaboration* means. In the council, at any level, the spiritual assistant is one member of the council. He/she is free to share wisdom, creative ideas, insights, experiences and knowledge that will contribute to vibrant fraternity life. What is equally clear is that the spiritual assistant not expect his/her ideas or opinions to be the last word on a subject. Rather, there is a sense of freely sharing but leaving the councilors free to share a different viewpoint. All the views receive respectful listening and contribute to good decisions. Supporting good council decisions and working to achieve their goals is part of the mission of a spiritual assistant.

Spiritual assistants are servants to all. Even when a spiritual assistant is animating liturgical celebrations, he/she calls upon competent secular Franciscans to participate in the planning and implementation of liturgical celebrations. Spiritual assistants share insights and a Franciscan spirit at gatherings of the fraternity. Thus they *assist* the members to a deeper dedication to the OFS way of life. Their contributions should enrich Franciscan life as much as possible.

Spiritual assistants participate in leadership training and other programs to sharpen the skills of council members or the members of the fraternity. He/she is especially alert to see that the action programs of the fraternity are reflective of the Franciscan spirit of respect and compassion for all people. Frequently the experience and training of a spiritual assistant can help the SA to "assist" with difficult issues in fraternity life.

Spiritual Assistants do not dominate a fraternity nor become a dominating presence. *Collaboration* and *dialogue* are key words for his/her service to the fraternity council. There is a gentle sense of equality between council members and the SA. The council also needs to respect that relationship.

Justice requires that the fraternity council offer a stipend to the spiritual assistant. The amount is up to the individual council. But it may include travel expenses, mailing expenses, reasonable stipend for conferences etc. The SA and council can dialogue about this to find a reasonable monthly or annual stipend.





## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT AND INITIAL FORMATION

### 1. **ORIENTATION** (USA National Statutes - Article 19.1, a-b)

- a. *Orientation is a time for determining a person's interest, eligibility and disposition to enter into the initial formation process. (cf. Guidelines for Initial Formation in the OFS in the USA - Page 25).*
- b. *The period of orientation shall consist of not less than three (3) months.*

### 2. **INITIAL FORMATION** (USA National Statutes - Article 19.2)

- a. *INQUIRY - the period of Inquiry, which begins with the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming (cf. Ritual - page 9), shall consist of not less than six (6) months.*
- b. *CANDIDACY - the period of Candidacy, which begins with the Rite of Admission (cf. Ritual- page 11) shall consist of not less than eighteen (18) months and not more than thirty-six (36) months.*
- c. *All persons in initial formation, in addition to attending their formation sessions, must participate in the gatherings of the local fraternity as this is an indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life (cf. General Constitutions - Article 40.3)*
- d. *To be admitted to the OFS in the United States, a person must be fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (i.e. having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation / Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist).*

National Statutes for the OFS in the USA - Article 19.2,a-b-c-d

### 3. **PROFESSION**

- a. *The minimum age for perpetual profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is twenty-one (21) years.*
- b. *The minimum age for temporary profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is eighteen (18) years.*

Ibid - Article 19.3.a-b

### 5. **FORM AND METHODOLOGY**

- a. *The form (i.e. content and process: cf. OFS General Constitutions 38.2) to be employed in both initial and ongoing formation is that found in the Guidelines for Initial Formation.*
- b. *The methodology employed in formation should be both interactive & experiential in nature. (cf. OFS General Constitutions 40.4)*
- c. *Opportunities for fraternities to meet together for the purposes of common ongoing & initial formation shall occur whenever possible at all levels of fraternity. (cf. OFS General Constitutions 40.1)*

Ibid - Article 19.5a -b-c

### 6. **PROVISIONS FOR REMOTE INITIAL FORMATION**

*In those **rare** instances in which a person is legitimately impeded from participating in the normal formation process of a local fraternity, recourse may be had to the Guidelines for Remote Initial Formation in the United States as adopted by the National Executive Council in June, 2000.*

National Statutes of the OFS in the USA - Article 19.6

# RE: General Constitutions - Article 38.2 - *The duration of the time of initiation and the forms employed in its development are established by the National Statutes.*

# RE: General Constitutions - Article 40.1 - *The time of formation lasts at least one year. The **national statutes can establish a longer period** (as has been done in the USA). The purpose of this period is the maturation of the vocation, the experience of the evangelical life in fraternity, and a better knowledge of the Order. This formation should be carried out with frequent meetings for study and prayer and with*

concrete experiences of service and the apostolate. ***These meetings should be held, as far as possible and opportune, in common with candidates of other fraternities.*** (OFS General Constitutions - Article 40.1)

*1. The local Assistant, together with the Council of the fraternity, is responsible for the formation of the candidates and expresses his or her assessment of each of the candidates before profession.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 24.1

*Initial formation* is the period when people learn to live the requirements of the OFS Rule and Constitutions and begin their initiation into fraternity life. It requires serious attention from the fraternity council (including the spiritual assistant) and the formation director (and formation team). A strong initial formation program promotes a vibrant fraternity way of life. A competent initial formation team of professed secular Franciscans gives dedicated service. Councilors are expected to take turns in attending formation meetings and get to know the newcomers. Ultimately it is the fraternity council which makes the discernment of acceptance for profession. They must be well informed to do this discernment.

A spiritual assistant's presence at formation meetings is important. If he/she cannot attend every meeting, the majority of formation sessions should be blessed by his/her presence. The formation director/team conducts the sessions. The spiritual assistant contributes to the formation of the newcomers, sharing insights and experiences that bring a gift to the formation meetings. The entire formation team is called to do the same. Inter-action and dialogue enable the newcomers to recognize their need to both listen and share. It prepares people for contributing at regular fraternity gatherings. We do NOT encourage lectures at every formation meeting. Interaction, dialogue and putting things into practice are the vital ingredients of a good formation program.

The spiritual assistant shares without dominating the sessions. It is a delicate but necessary presence that the SA brings to initial formation. Healthy collaboration with the formation team is important. The ***For Up to Now*** (FUN) manual offers fine preparation material for formators. Articles on *Ecclesiology and the Theology of the Laity* in the ***For Up to Now*** Manual offer a helpful background resource on the role of laity in the Church. (NB: The FOR UP TO NOW manual is **NOT** to be used as a formation text!).

Note that **OFS legislation encourages fraternities in close proximity to provide a common formation program.** Fraternities sharing this responsibility develop relationships that enable people to work together in ministry and Franciscan life. Fraternities with a common initial and ongoing formation program build relationships and a common understanding that reflects a united Franciscan family. Spiritual assistants "assist" in building such collaboration. Fraternity identity is ALWAYS connected to the fact that the fraternity is part of a worldwide organization. Individual fraternity identity is never a good reason to avoid a collaborative formation program with several fraternities. The various councils work together to work out difficulties that may arise.

Fraternities offer candidates a Franciscan retreat, or at the very least, a day of reflection to prepare for profession. Secular Franciscan fraternities, in a district or close geographic area, can have a common retreat/reflection for their candidates for profession. The SAs collaborate in preparing such times of reflection. If possible, profession is done at a Eucharistic celebration. The minister of the candidate's fraternity (NOT the SA) receives the profession.

Questions about formation should be addressed to the *National Formation Commission* of the OFS in the USA (cf. formation Website). Formators need to be familiar with the *For Up to Now* manual, **a tool to help formators** conduct the formation sessions. (*It is NOT meant to be used as a text for newcomers!*)

*The laity should therefore highly esteem and support as far as they can, private and public works of charity and social assistance movements, including international schemes. By these channels effective help is brought to individuals and nations in need. They should collaborate in this with all men and women of good will.*

Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People (Apostolicam actuositatem) - Vatican II - Paragraph 8



## SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT AND ONGOING FORMATION

1. Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a **permanent and continuous way**. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each and everyone and in the fulfillment of their proper mission in the Church and in society.

2. The Fraternity **has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed** and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.

3. Ongoing formation - accomplished by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experience - aims to assist the brothers and sisters:

- + Rule 4 in listening to and meditating on the Word of God, "... going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel;"
- + in reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith, and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions;
- + in discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by studying the writings of St. Francis, St. Clare and Franciscan authors.

OFS General Constitutions - Article 44.1, .2, .3

### 4. ONGOING FORMATION

Ongoing formation is the responsibility of all professed members consonant with Article 44 of the General Constitutions.

### 5. FORM & METHODOLOGY

- a. The form (i.e. content and process; cf. OFS General Constitutions 38.2) to be employed in both initial and ongoing formation is that found in the Guidelines for Initial Formation.
- b. The methodology employed in formation should be **both interactive and experiential** in nature (cf. OSF General Constitutions 40.1)
- c. Opportunities for **fraternities to meet together** for the purpose of common ongoing and initial formation **shall occur whenever possible at all levels of fraternity**.

National Statutes of the OFS in the USA - Article 19.4, .5. a-b-c

Lifetime commitments require growth in knowledge and experience since life does not remain static. The world, the Church, and cultures change. Like it or not we grow older and things are different. We experience changes in employment or move to a new place. Accidents, church rituals, health and many other things change perceptions and viewpoints. Changes in the Church, in society, and in the world require changes in our personal and fraternity lives. Changes around us call for changes within us.

*Ongoing formation* is a necessity both for fraternity life and for personal life and growth. The old answers often do not fit new situations. Previous understanding cannot deal with the expanding knowledge all around us. Our knowledge of the faith develops with time and experience. Some of our former answers now seem naive. Things we thought were settled need new input to face changing life situations. Acquiring the wisdom that keeps God in the picture is a never-ending process. The Holy Spirit longs to share wisdom with us and guide us to understand fresh insights. *Thank you, Spirit of God!*

### Spiritual assistants have a twofold responsibility:

- 1. On the one hand SAs must deal with changes in their personal lives. They need to grow in personal understanding and implementation of the faith and Franciscan life.
- 2. On the other hand, their role requires them to listen and walk with Secular Franciscans who face similar issues. Together they seek better ways for living and understanding their personal growth, faith development and the deepening of their commitment to the Franciscan spirit.

*Ongoing formation* is part and parcel of Franciscan life. Without *ongoing formation* people remain stuck in one way of seeing everything. Many people resist change because it requires a personal change. *Daily, radical interior conversion* (OFS Rule #7) is easier to talk about than to accomplish. Spiritual Assistants are called to support, encourage and participate in the *ongoing formation* programs of the fraternity. The SA, like all Franciscans, can make a difference by sharing ideas and possibilities that enhance both fraternity life and the personal lives of the OFS members.

When *ongoing formation* calls for change/conversion in fraternity life, some people will say that nothing can be done. Then someone in a fraternity begins to do it. Once again hope becomes possible. Before long it may be achieved while everyone wonders why we didn't do it sooner! Creativity opens the door to fresh insights and new ways of following the OFS Rule and the Franciscan way of life. Creativity frees us from some older perspectives and offers fresh possibilities. As creative insights blossom among us we begin to see with new eyes. Fresh perspectives and knowledge allow growth and development to bloom. *Ongoing formation* is not only *learning* about what is happening, but also *actively implementing* the gospel-vision in daily Franciscan life. It is an exciting process and part of vibrant fraternity life.

Local, regional, national and international councils, working together, develop *ongoing formation* programs. The monthly "*Dossiers*" of the OSF Presidency (on the internet - CIOFS.com) help *ongoing formation*. Issues in the Church and in society often challenge our Franciscan spirit. *Ongoing formation* helps us deal with such issues. Church and societal issues are dealt with through dialogue i.e. *listening and sharing* with each other. Dialogue at fraternity gatherings is a good way of inter-acting.

**The difference between dialogue and debate.** (cf. This *Handbook* - Page 78)

A **debater** looks for ways to win the argument. Debaters look for ways to use the other person's ideas in order to find flaws in their arguments. Debaters try to discover where the other person's ideas are distorted or invalid or old-fashioned. At the same time they are determined not to change their own views. They oppose the "other" and attempt to prove the other person is wrong. Emotions like anger are often used to make their point. It is a win-lose way of communicating and they are going to WIN!

**Dialogue** is a win-win tool. The goal is to understand the *other's* way of looking at things and why they think and act like they do. Dialogue seeks to understand how "other peoples' " experiences shape their beliefs. In dialogue we accept the experiences of others as valid and real. Dialogue invites us to share our own experiences and understanding rather than denigrating the ideas of the *other*. In dialogue we seek a common *understanding* even if we still disagree. Our willingness to "listen" with an open mind and heart is a spiritual exercise of abandoning personal perceptions while the other person is speaking. We maintain a relationship even when we disagree with each other's ideas. At the end of dialogue we understand each other better than before. A relationship remains. We choose to build bridges to the "other" rather than building walls to keep us separate. Dialogue has little chance when participants arrogantly believe they are the only ones with the right answers!

*Effective dialogue between people of diverse experiences and beliefs usually requires the guidance of a facilitator. ... Facilitators help create a safe space by setting ground rules or guidelines to keep dialogue participants focused on listening to and working with each other. Facilitators guide the dialogue process without deciding who is right or wrong, or declaring a "winner" as a moderator does in a debate. ... Dialogue works best when the people involved are open to learning and changing.*

The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects - Lisa Schirch & David Campit - Pages 9-10

**NB:** cf. **Page 78** in this *Handbook* for more information on dialogue and debate!





## **FRANCISCAN FAMILY CONNECTIONS (revised - 2011)**

**A course to prepare Spiritual Assistants**

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) revised the 2007 edition of the *Franciscan Family Connections* course in 2011. The 19 month course prepares people for the role of spiritual assistance to local and regional councils and fraternities. The original manual, *Life-giving Union*, was written in 1996.

### **1. Who is eligible to take the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course?**

1st Order or TOR friars; Franciscan religious; secular Franciscans who are permanently professed for at least 5 years; men or women of non-Franciscan religious Orders; diocesan priests and deacons. Friars are strongly encouraged to take the course or read the appropriate pages of the book when they are appointed as a spiritual assistant to a local or regional fraternity. Regional SA applicants answer all the questions in the book and local applicants answer only those questions listed for local SA's.

### **2. Who conducts the course?**

Usually the PSA of the Province to which the fraternity-in-need is bonded. It can also be a qualified person willing to be the mentor and delegated by the appropriate PSA to do so. The PSA requires a letter of recommendation from the applicant's pastor or deacon and a religious/lay person who knows the applicant well. The local council-in-need may recommend people and send the recommendation(s) to the PSA. During the course the discernment of a call to be a SA is part of the process. Applicants who wish to take the course for personal ongoing formation can contact a PSA to initiate the process. Dialogue can usually solve any particular difficulties. Applicants ultimately should be able to fulfill the role of an SA after taking the course. The course can be conducted by a competent OFS/1st Order/TOR team. This is recommended when the course is conducted through regular monthly gatherings of applicants.

### **3. Where does an applicant get a copy of the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011)?**

Smoky Valley Printing - P.O. Box 189 - Lindsborg, KS 67456 - (785) 227-2364 - [lindabce@kans.com](mailto:lindabce@kans.com) prints and distributes the book. The applicant or the fraternity purchases the book. The introductory pages (Pages i to iv) of *Franciscan Family Connections* - Revised 2011, spell out the process to follow when applying for the course. *The needed information is in the book.*

### **4. What is the process for taking the course?**

Nineteen months (or more) is the normal time-frame for completing the course. The applicant contacts the PSA of the Province to which the fraternity-in-need is bonded. The time period may be longer or shorter as determined through dialogue and depending on the needs of the applicant or mentor.

- a. If the course is taken individually, applicant and mentor mutually decide on the way the course will be handled. If they are geographically close, they could meet together once a month to deal with the questions for each chapter. One chapter a month is a common norm. If distance is a problem, the applicant types his/her answers to the questions and sends them to the mentor. The mentor returns the answers with any corrections, suggestions etc that are appropriate. They then move on to the next chapter until the course is completed.
- b. If there are a number of applicants in proximity to one another, the group can meet monthly with the mentor to answer the questions and share ideas on the chapter. *When possible this is a preferred way to take the course.* Other competent people can collaborate in guiding the sessions. In a correspondence course applicants should type their answers. If a number of applicants are reasonably close but cannot meet monthly, they might meet quarterly or semi-annually with the mentor. *Meeting as a group is a preferred process for learning.*
- c. During the period of study, *mentor and applicant mutually discern* whether the applicant is called to be a SA. They agree to acknowledge that the Spirit calls the applicant to serve as a SA or is inviting him/her to some other way of service.
- d. If the applicant completes the course satisfactorily, the applicant receives a certificate that says he/she is ready to serve as a SA. If the mentor is someone other than the PSA, the PSA



- is informed of the successful completion of the course.
- e. CNSA recommends that anyone completing the course be ready to serve as a spiritual assistant to a fraternity in his/her area. A Secular Franciscan does not ordinarily serve his/her own fraternity as spiritual assistant. There may be situations when pastoral considerations make this necessary. Only the Provincial or PSA of the province to which a fraternity is bonded can make the appointment. *The name, address and certification information of the SA is sent to the CNSA secretary* and any others who need the information.
  - f. In the final months of the course we recommend that the applicant *spend some time as an intern* to an experienced spiritual assistant.
  - g. If no fraternity is in need of a spiritual assistant, the individual remains available to serve when the need arises. If this period is prolonged, *ongoing formation* will keep the applicant up-to-date on his/her role as a spiritual assistant.
  - h. If a number of people complete the training program within a region, they may be part of a pool of trained SA's who are available when needs arise.

*The spiritual assistant plays an important and sensitive role in the meetings of the fraternity and its council. The assistant's specific area is spiritual: to foster communion with the Church, to bear witness to Franciscan spirituality, to co-operate in formation and to nourish the Christian life of the fraternity. The assistant's contributions to the meetings, those of the fraternity as well as those of the council, should be related chiefly to this specific area. Naturally this calls for tact and spiritual maturity to know when to keep quiet and give priority to the secular leaders in the co-ordination and animation of the fraternity.*

Manual for Spiritual Assistants - General Spiritual Assistants - Chapter iv - #4.1

## **5. What is the cost of the course?**

That varies depending on a number of issues. The recommended readings may require purchasing books and the costs will escalate. If a local fraternity or local library has the books it would save the costs of purchase. If the course is by mail, postage costs will be part of the cost. It may be reasonable to offer a stipend to the PSA or mentor who conducts the course. If a group gathers at a parish, friary or home for their meetings, it is a matter of justice to offer an alms for the use of the facility. In short, cost depends on many factors and is the responsibility of *the applicant in collaboration with the fraternity* which will benefit from his/her service. If a group meets together, they share a mutual responsibility to cover the costs. Local and regional fraternities may contribute to these costs since they will be the beneficiaries. The applicant can make his/her needs known to those who are able to offer help or financial assistance. A region or fraternity can create a budget item to support people who need it.

## **6. Preparing a Regional Spiritual Assistant.**

*Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) also serves as a training book for **regional** spiritual assistants. Particular texts and questions in FFC focus on the responsibilities of an RSA. The process that is followed for appointing local spiritual assistants also applies to regional spiritual assistants.

*1. The regional Assistants to the OFS and the Franciscan youth are appointed by the competent major superior, **after consultation with the respective regional council**. Where more than one major superior of the same Order is involved in the appointment, the norms established jointly by the Superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the regional fraternity shall be followed.*

*2. They give their service to the regional (executive) council and see to the spiritual assistance to the regional fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a conference and render their service collegially.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS -- Article 21.1, .2

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In the day-to-day working, COLLABORATION and DIALOGUE  
are vital ingredients between a spiritual assistant and  
a fraternity council, *Use them regularly and wisely.*



## JOB DESCRIPTION - REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT

*3c. the regional spiritual assistants give their service to the regional council and see to the spiritual assistance to the regional fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a conference and give their service collegially.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 90.3c

*2c. the regional council requests the assistant from the major superior, indicated collegially by the major superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the regional fraternity.*

*3. The **competent major superior**, having heard the council of the fraternity concerned, **appoints the assistant** according to the norms of these Constitutions and of the Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 91.2c, .3

*1. The regional Assistants to the OFS and Franciscan Youth are appointed by the competent major superior, **after consultation with the respective regional council**. Where there is more than one major superior involved in the appointment, the norms established jointly by the Superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the regional fraternity shall be followed.*

*2. They give their service to the regional council and see to the spiritual assistance to the regional fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a conference and render their service collegially.*

*3. It is the responsibility of the Conference of regional spiritual assistants, or to the regional Assistant if there is only one:*

- + to collaborate with the regional council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the Secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and of society in the region, and in a special way in the formation of the leaders.*
- + to provide for the pastoral visits of the local councils of the OFS and to ensure a presence at the local elective chapters;*
- + to co-ordinate, at the regional level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the Assistants and the fraternal union among them;*
- + to foster the interest of friars in the OFS and Franciscan youth.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 21.1, .2, .3

*1. The regional Assistant must keep the major Superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the OFS and of the Franciscan Youth in the region.*

*2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order to the OFS and Franciscan Youth, meet with local fraternities assisted by his own Order in the region and keep constant fraternal contacts with the local Assistants of his own Order.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 22.1, .2

*3. The Regional Spiritual Assistant or the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants exercises pastoral care and spiritual guidance in regard to each regional fraternity as an integral component part of NAFRA and of the OFS, by the same means and manner as does the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) in regard to NAFRA (cf. Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - articles 21 & 22)*

USA National Statutes - Article 21.3

*1. The Regional Fraternity Council is composed of the Ministers of the Local Fraternities that together form the Regional Fraternity, the Regional Executive Council and the Regional Spiritual Assistants or the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants, each of whom may vote. Regional Spiritual Assistants, however, do not vote in financial matters and in elective chapters. (cf. Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 12.1)*

USA National Statutes - Article 22.1

**COMMENT:** The role of a regional spiritual assistant is similar to a local spiritual assistant. But a RSA serves an entire region. The meetings are regular and longer but not as frequent. The RSA needs a wider perspective to include servant-leadership to all the local fraternities in the region. Regional level leadership provides guidance and visitations to the entire region and develops vibrant Franciscan community life among the fraternities of the region. The **regional fraternity** includes the local ministers of local fraternities in the region; the regional spiritual assistant (or the Conference of Spiritual Assistants if there are several RSAs); and the regional executive council.

Appointing a regional spiritual assistant is the responsibility of the major superiors (Minister provincial or delegated Provincial Spiritual Assistant) of the First Order/TOR provinces which serve the region. When there are several major superiors they establish norms for such appointments. If each 1st Order/TOR province or Provincial conference chooses to make appointment(s), the region could have four regional spiritual assistants. The major superiors make the appointment according to the process on which they agree. Having at least one RSA is needed to fulfill the *altius moderamen* required by the Church.

**The major superior(s) consult with the regional council about the appointment.** When there is a shortage of friars, there are often less than four regional spiritual assistants. In reality there may be only one regional spiritual assistant if the shortage is acute. CNSA has opened the door to have *suitable and well-prepared* **OFS members or Franciscan religious** appointed as regional spiritual assistants.

# Recommendations from the annual meeting of Provincial & Spiritual Assistants with CNSA (2004-2005);

1. *We reaffirm fraternal ties between the 1st Order/TOR and the OFS in the selection and appointment of local OFS spiritual assistants.*
2. *Transfers of altius moderamen to another province should already be taking place to insure the better opportunity for assistance by the friars.*
3. *We affirm our preference that a Regional Spiritual Assistant (RSA) should be a friar, a qualified secular Franciscan or a "Franciscan religious" trained and mentored to collaborate with or replace a friar Regional Spiritual Assistant..*

Libertyville, IL - "Marytown" - September 16, 2004  
Seattle, WA -- September 15, 2005 added "Franciscan religious"

2. Regional spiritual assistants collaborate with the regional executive council (REC) to animate the spiritual and apostolic ministry of the region. RSA's assist in the development of leaders in the region.
3. Regional spiritual assistants conduct a *pastoral* visitation of each fraternity of the region once every three years. This may be done in conjunction with the *fraternal* visitation or done separately. Details concerning a visitation can be found in the section of this *Handbook* concerning *pastoral visitations* (cf. **Page 28 ff**). One important issue is for the *pastoral visitor* to explore the formation programs (initial and ongoing) of the local fraternities. The RSA offers support to the local spiritual assistant.
4. At elections the regional spiritual assistant is present as the witness of the Church and the Order in elections at local fraternities of the region. He/she may delegate this role (in writing) if unable to attend.
5. The regional spiritual assistant serves the local spiritual assistants. He/she develops a fraternal union among them and supports them in any way possible. HOW this is done is determined by the regional spiritual assistant(s). Regional spiritual assistants support all the local spiritual assistants in the region. The RSAs serve all the fraternities in the region (no matter to which province they are bonded).
6. The regional spiritual assistant fosters the interest of the friars in the OFS and in Franciscan Youth. His/her creativity and the culture of the Province will determine the path this role takes.
7. A regional spiritual assistant informs the major superiors about the life and activities of the OFS and Franciscan youth in the region. As possible and realistic, the RSA keeps in touch with province friars.
8. The RSA works with the regional executive council to communicate with NEC and NAFRA through

their annual reports and other forms as needed. The RSA(s) pass on appropriate communications from CIOFS, NAFRA, NEC or CNSA to the local spiritual assistants. The RSA passes information upward from local SA's to the CNSA and other national groups when the situation requires it.

9. The RSA maintains communication with the *Conference of National Spiritual Assistants* (CNSA). RSAs attend and encourage local SAs to attend SA's meetings sponsored by CNSA or called for at a *regional pastoral visitation*.

10. The *president* of the Conference of regional spiritual assistants is a member of the regional executive council and the regional fraternity. He/she votes in all matters brought to the regional fraternity and/or the regional executive council (except in economic matters or elections in the region). In imitation of CNSA, the Conference of RSAs may take turns as *president* of the Conference of RSAs. The *president* attends the REC meetings. All RSA's attend the regional chapter. If needed, the *president* may choose to consult the members of the conference about REC topics that are especially important.

11. The *president* of the Regional spiritual assistants' conference gives a report on the REC's meetings to the RSAs' conference. The RSA conference members attend the regional chapter meetings and have a vote unless otherwise noted (although not on finances nor in elections).

#### **PROCESS FOR APPOINTING A MEMBER OF THE OFS AS REGIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT.**

1. The Provincial Spiritual Assistants, with fraternities in the region, consult the appropriate council when making the appointment of a RSA (cf. OSF General Constitutions 91.3 & 91.2.c / Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 21.1). They follow the general process for making appointments.
2. The PSA needs assurance that the nominee is *suitable and well-prepared* (cf. OSF General Constitutions article 88.1). This includes taking the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) course with a focus on texts particular to RSAs and other studies the PSA or the training team may require. The PSA is the mentor or he delegates someone to serve as mentor or work with a training team.
3. Secular Franciscans nominated for the role of RSA should be permanently professed for at least five years. Experience in service on a local, regional, or national council is helpful.
4. Usually a PSA with fraternities in the region will mentor the *FFC* course. Mutual agreement among PSA's can adjust these guidelines among themselves as needed. If personal, face-to-face sessions are possible, we encourage it. PSA's with fraternities in the region can establish particular guidelines for the region. Before appointing a regional SA, the regional executive council is to be consulted.

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#### **Guide for SAs**

*Two extremes should be avoided during meetings:*

- + *First, the temptation to lead the meeting in person, especially if the secular officers appear weak or lacks formation.*
- + *Second, the temptation to let things go and limit oneself strictly to the dictates of one's duty, or even to lose interest in the fraternity.*

*In council meetings, the spiritual assistant:*

- + *is by right, with vote, a member of the council of the fraternity which he or she serves, and collaborates with it in all its activities, taking part in its meetings and activities in accordance with the law proper to the OFS.*
- + *acts with respect for the responsibilities and role of the seculars, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, coordination and animation of the fraternity.*

Manual for Spiritual Assistants - General Spiritual Assistants - Chapter iv - #4.1, .2



(CNSA) CONFERENCE OF  
**NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS**

*1. The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the secular Franciscans.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 13.1

*3.b the national assistants give their service to the national council, see to the spiritual assistance to the OFS in the whole territory of the national fraternity and, at the national level, to the co-ordination of the regional assistants. If they are more than one, they form a conference and give their service collegially.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 90.3b

*1. The national Assistants of the OFS and Franciscan Youth are appointed by the competent major superior, after consultation with the respective national council. Where more than one major superior is involved in the appointment, the norms established together by the superiors with jurisdiction in the national territory shall be followed.*

*2. They give their service to the national council and see to the spiritual assistance to the national fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a Conference and render their service collegially.*

*3. It is the responsibility of the Conference of National Assistants, or to the national Assistant if there is only one:*

- + to collaborate with the national council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and the society of the country, and in a special way in the formation of leaders;*
- + to provide for the pastoral visits of the regional councils of the OFS and to ensure a presence in the regional elective chapters;*
- + to coordinate, at the national level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the assistants, and the fraternal union among them;*
- + to foster the interest of the friars in the OFS and in the Franciscan Youth.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 19.1, .2, .3

*1, The national Assistant must keep the major superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the OFS and the Franciscan Youth in the country.*

*2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order to the OFS and to the Franciscan Youth, meet with local fraternities assisted by his own Order and keep fraternal and constant contacts with the regional and local assistants of his own Order.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 20.1, .2

*3. The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a limited time, which accumulated cannot be more than twelve (12) years.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 15.3

*2. Each Conference of Assistants functions according to its own internal by-laws.*

*3. The national and regional statutes of the OFS establish the number of assistants who are members of the national or regional council.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 16.2, .3

The members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) in the USA are generally appointed by the Conference of Provincials of each jurisdiction (1st Order or TOR) -or- the provinces of a jurisdiction may take turns appointing one of their members to CNSA. Only the major superiors have the right to appoint one of their friars to CNSA. The term limit of an appointment to CNSA is limited

to 12 consecutive years.

Within the CNSA itself there are particular offices assumed by one of the friars for a two year period. Thus one friar is President-in-turn for a two year term. Another of the friars serves as CNSA secretary for a two year term. When the president's term is finished the friar secretary assumes the presidency etc. This is not a big problem and the offices are passed on without difficulty.

CNSA has selected two secular Franciscans to be executive secretary and treasurer of CNSA. Their role for the CNSA is spelled out in the job descriptions given in this *Handbook* - Pages 58 & 59.

1. The CNSA friars **collaborate** with the national fraternity (NAFRA) and national executive council (NEC) in the animation and spiritual assistance to the Secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and secular society in the USA. CNSA meets three times a year unless issues require more meetings.

2. A special concern of CNSA is the **formation of leaders** of the OFS in the USA.

3. CNSA makes **pastoral visitations**, once every three years, to the regional executive councils and regional fraternities in the USA. They may make the visit independently of the fraternal visit, or make it collaboratively with the fraternal visitation. **A post-visitational letter**, written collaboratively or separately, **is sent within a month of the visit** to the visited Region. It shares insights, recommendations, corrections or affirmations to help the region enrich its Franciscan life. At visitations, among other issues, CNSA friars show concern for the spiritual assistants, both regional and local, as well as the quality of formation in the region. (cf. *Handbook* - Page 28 & 29)

4. CNSA endeavors to assist the **Provincial and Regional** spiritual assistants in the USA through **various gatherings**. The frequency is decided by CNSA. CNSA recognizes its responsibilities to the assistants and brings regional and provincial assistants together both to learn and to dialogue about common issues and problems. These gatherings also allow creative ideas to be shared. CNSA has a web-site and a serve-list on the internet to enhance communication among SAs at all levels in the USA.

5. CNSA's president-in-turn makes an **annual report** to the members of NEC and NAFRA to keep them in touch with our work. The CNSA president-in-turn attends meetings of the National Executive Council and NAFRA and shares in their deliberations. Each CNSA member submits an annual written report to their Conference of Provincials (or Provincial) of their 1st Order/TOR jurisdiction.

6. CNSA members provide **written materials to serve spiritual assistants**. This *Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the OFS* is one instance as is the *Franciscan Family Connections* (Revised 2011) program for training spiritual assistants. TAU-USA articles and internet communications support the work of, and facilitate communication with, the spiritual assistants throughout the United States.

7. CNSA is the conduit through which the **General Spiritual Assistants** communicate information and issues that relate to spiritual assistance. In turn, CNSA represents the needs of the USA spiritual assistants to our counterparts on the *General Conference of Spiritual Assistants*. **CNSA collaborates with the National Executive Council** in dealing with OFS issues in the USA.

8. **Financial** support for CNSA comes from donations from NAFRA and from our own 1st Order/TOR provincial or provincial conferences in the USA. While our publications initially require an infusion of money from our treasury, we generally retire that debt through the sale of our books. There is some money gained from the programs for Provincial and Regional spiritual assistants who pay their own way to the nation-wide gathering. Our practice for regular CNSA meetings is: The 1st Order/TOR conferences/provinces pay for our travel expenses; our CNSA treasury pays for our room and board at the places where we meet. Any outside meals at our meetings are paid from personal budgets.

9. CNSA is responsible to **stay in touch** with the regional and provincial spiritual assistants. We can be a source of help and information when assistants communicate with us about issues and problems that occur in their service to the OFS. We develop ways and means to achieve a bond of union with

the spiritual assistants that we serve.

10. CNSA **appoints spiritual assistants to the various national commissions of the OFS**. The recommendations for appointment are requested, in writing, by the commission chair-person. The chair sends a written request to the CNSA. The commission chair offers a resume' to show a person's competence to serve on the commission. CNSA then makes the appointment. The role of SA's to national commissions is spelled out on **page 24** in this *Handbook*. The appointment is for a 3-year term. The usual term limit is two three-year terms.

11. An important role of each CNSA member is to **develop and maintain the interest of the friars of their jurisdiction in the OFS**. Each friar seeks ways that are most effective for communicating with the friars of their province or Order.

12. It may be obvious, but CNSA members and all spiritual assistants are called to be **prayerful** people. We share with the OFS the task of *rebuilding our Church and world* which is always in need of reform. Our intimacy with Jesus helps us create a world and people influenced by the Gospel. The Holy Spirit dwells in us and prompts us to faithfulness. We are mindful of the importance of **keeping our Franciscan charism alive and well** in all councils, fraternities and OFS members in the USA. We remind friars that Secular Franciscans are not "Go-fers" for them. We seek a sense of respect that values the Franciscan family relationship among all its members. Ministries among us are collective ways to serve the OFS, our own Franciscan family, the Church and the world.

14. A member of CNSA shall ordinarily **write a column in TAU-USA** that focuses on news and ideas for spiritual assistants and OSF members.

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*The Church, however,  
clasping sinners to its bosom,  
at once holy and always  
in need of purification,  
following constantly the path  
of penance and renewal.*

*The Church, "like a stranger  
in a foreign land, presses forward amid  
the persecutions of the world  
and the consolations of God," (St. Augustine)  
announcing the cross and death of the Lord  
until he comes (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26).*

*But by the power of the risen Lord  
it is given strength to overcome,  
in patience and in love,  
its sorrows and its difficulties,  
both those that are from within  
and those that are from without,  
so that it may reveal to the world,  
faithfully, although with shadows,  
the mystery of its Lord until, in the end,  
it shall be manifested in full light.*

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church  
Lumen Gentium - Vatican II - Paragraph 8



## **ROLE OF THE PROVINCIAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT**

**COMMENT:** The *major superior* in a Province is the *Provincial minister* of the 1st Order or TOR. He has primary responsibility for establishing fraternities, making pastoral visits and providing for spiritual assistance. He may perform these duties personally or through a friar he delegates to fulfill these duties in his name. Such a *delegated friar* is called the *PROVINCIAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT*. He acts in the name of the minister provincial of his province in those issues that concern the Secular Franciscan Order. The provincial minister determines the extent of the delegated authority he gives to the PSA. (cf. Article 5.2 of the Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS) There is no special limit to PSA's term of office.

1. The Provincial Spiritual Assistant (PSA), duly delegated by the Provincial minister, has the following duties:

2. *It is their specific competence, in the name of their jurisdiction:*

- + *to canonically establish new local fraternities and to guarantee them spiritual assistance.*
- + *to animate spiritually, to visit, and to meet the local fraternities assisted by their own Order.*
- + *to keep themselves informed about the spiritual assistance given to the OFS and the Franciscan youth.*
- + *to appoint the spiritual assistants.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 11.2

In fulfilling any of these duties, the PSA is limited by the extent of the delegation he receives from his Provincial Minister. The PSA fulfills the *altius moderamen* to the local OFS fraternities bonded to his 1st Order or TOR Province. He keeps his Provincial Minister informed about the condition of the OFS fraternities bonded to his province. Regional SA's usually do the visitations of fraternities in their region.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. The PSA establishes new fraternities who wish to be bonded to his province. He observes all the requirements of the law of the Church, the OFS and his own Order. (cf. Pages 38 ff in this *Handbook*)

2. He witnesses the canonical establishment of a new fraternity, though he may delegate this role to another friar for good reasons. He keeps the minister provincial informed on these matters.

3. The PSA is responsible for animating and pastorally visiting local fraternities bonded to his Province. This duty is generally fulfilled through the *Regional spiritual assistant(s)* of the appropriate region. Copies of the visitation reports of the RSA are sent to the PSA of the province to which fraternities are bonded.

4. Individual fraternities, (bonded to a Province), have the right of recourse to their PSA in serious matters and special needs.

5. The PSA or Provincial appoints spiritual assistants to the local fraternities bonded to his province. The local council submits its request to the PSA (or Provincial if PSA does not have delegation) of the 1st Order or TOR province to which the fraternity-in-need is bonded. The local council submits the name(s) of suitable individuals to the PSA. Whoever is selected takes the CNSA training program if training is needed. If the appointee is not a member of the PSA's Province or the Order, he *consults* with either the religious superior or, if necessary, the bishop of the diocese of the individual diocesan priest or deacon. In the case of an OFS member, he *consults* the local council of the applicant. When appointing a *regional* spiritual assistant he consults with the Regional executive council.

6. The PSA and the RSA's collaborate in developing ongoing formation for local spiritual assistants.

7. If the Provincial retains the authority to appoint SAs, the PSA offers advice and counsel to his Provincial Minister concerning the appointment of a spiritual assistant, local or regional.



8. The PSA, together with other interested friars, shall work among the friars of his province to develop a good knowledge of the OFS. Friars, in their time of formation, need both information about the OFS and, if possible, experience with people in local fraternities.

9. The PSA can provide input and recommendations to the Friar Conference of Provincial Ministers of his own obedience (or his provincial), as part of his annual report on the OFS. The appointment of a friar to the CNSA is another opportunity for ongoing formation for the provincials.

10. The PSA keeps his provincial minister and province informed about the quality of spiritual assistance and the development of the OFS in fraternities attached to their province.

*1. The canonical establishment of new fraternities is done at the request of the secular Franciscans concerned and with the prior consultation and collaboration of the OFS Council at the higher level, to which the new fraternity will be related according to the national statutes. The written consent of the local ordinary is necessary for the canonical establishment of a fraternity outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the 1st Order or the TOR.*

*2. Any transfer of a local fraternity to the pastoral care of another Franciscan religious Order is done according to the procedures established by the national statutes of the OFS.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 6.1, .2  
cf. National Statutes of the USA - Article 18.2, .4

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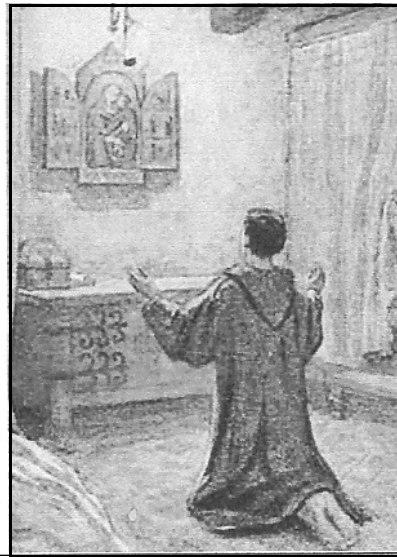
***Let no one make being over others  
his own.***

*"I did not come to be served,  
but to serve, says the Lord."*

*Let those who are placed over others  
boast about that position as much as  
they would if they were assigned the  
duty of washing the feet of their  
brothers. And if they are upset at  
having their place over others taken  
away from them than at losing their  
position at their feet, the more they  
store up a money bag\* to the peril of  
their soul.*

*Admonition IV*  
Francis of Assisi - The Saint  
Vol I - Page 130

\* The "money bag" is a reference to the  
treachery of Judas Iscariot.





## ROLE OF A SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT TO A NATIONAL COMMISSION

Revised by CNSA - September 13, 2004 / February - 2012

The Spiritual Assistant (SA) to a National Commission is appointed by the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) based on a request and/or recommendation of a National Commission Chair. This SA is accountable to CNSA. The SA to a commission will ordinarily serve a term of three years with the possibility of an extension for another three years.

The SA, once appointed, serves as a member of a National Commission. The ministry of the SA to a Commission reflects that of the SA on any other level. The SA's presence illustrates the bond between the National Commission and the 1st Order and TOR. The SA, in a non-directive/non-managing manner, strives to keep present the Franciscan charism during the deliberations of the particular National Commission on which he/she serves.

# The general responsibilities or duties of the SA to a National Commission include:

1. To attend Commission meeting(s) and assist the Commission in carrying out their Mission Statement.
2. To offer guidance concerning matters moral, Franciscan, ecclesial and fraternal to the National Commission for which they serve as spiritual assistant.
3. To facilitate prayer and theological reflection in the National Commission which they serve.
4. Upon the request of the Commission chair, to write an article about the commission's ministry for TAU-USA, and participate in or present workshops and retreats for national, regional, or local conferences when requested.
5. To communicate with the chair on commission issues and, as delegated by the chair, with regional chair-persons and other members of the Franciscan family.
6. To report to the Commission chair regarding assigned commission activities and projects.
7. To assist the Chair in:
  - A. Responding to commission-related requests from the co-ordinator of the National Commissions (If there is one).
  - B. Functioning as a clearing house, with other members of the commission, for resources and ideas, receiving recommendations and evaluating proposals for commission-related projects undertaken within the OFS or by other groups, secular and religious, having a bearing on the mission and ministry of the Commission.

Minor revisions - February, 2012



*The world would be better off if people tried to become better.  
And people would become better if they stopped trying to become better off.  
For when everybody tries to become better off, nobody is better off.  
But where everybody tries to become better - everybody is better off.  
Everybody would be rich if nobody tried to become richer.  
And nobody would be poor if everybody tried to be the poorest.  
And everybody would be what they ought to be if everybody tried to be  
what he wants the other fellow to be.*

Peter Maurin - Catholic Worker co-founder.

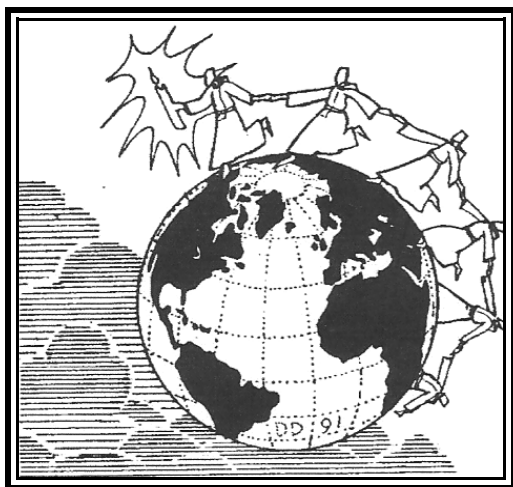


## TERMS OF OFFICE FOR SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

3. *The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a limited time, which accumulated cannot be more than twelve years.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 15.3

- + If a spiritual assistant has been appointed for a 12 year term, his/her term ends after serving the same fraternity for 12 consecutive years. When the 12 year term is complete, he/she may be appointed to another fraternity by the PSA with authority to do so. It can happen that an individual SA is transferred by his/her superior to another ministry during the 12 year term. Personal reasons, (health, moving to another area etc) can also prevent his/her ability continue to serve as a SA to a fraternity. In all cases the individual SA involved should notify the PSA and the concerned council of his/her situation.
- + **An option:** The PSA's may appoint a spiritual assistant to a particular fraternity for a period of three or four years at a time, i.e. the time between the Provincial Chapters of the 1st Order or TOR. The PSA should inform the spiritual assistants, in writing, that this is being done. Spiritual Assistants thus appointed must be re-appointed after each Provincial Chapter. When the shorter terms add up to 12 consecutive years, the official term for the SA is expired and a new SA needs to be appointed to the fraternity. Notifying the appropriate people should be done in a reasonable time before the term ends.



*Among the diverse ways of life that still exist in the Franciscan Family, that of the secular Franciscans - lay and cleric - occupies a very particular place. They recognize Francis as their founder and live the charism within the secular dimension. For them, since they are an integral part of the Franciscan Family and have been historically united to us Franciscan religious, the Church granted the privilege of having the major superiors of the First Order and TOR as those mainly responsible for their spiritual and pastoral care. We are responsible for the higher direction (Altius moderamen) that seeks to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church, and union with the Franciscan Family, values which represent a vital commitment for the secular Franciscans. (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 85.1, .2)*

Letter of the Ministers General  
of the 1st Order/TOR  
at the beginning of the *Statutes for Spiritual  
& Pastoral Assistance to the OFS* - October 4, 2009



## CONFERENCE OF GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS

**COMMENT:** There are similarities to the responsibilities of the *Regional* and *National* Spiritual assistants. The differences focus mainly on the breadth of the responsibilities as we widen the circle of people who are served. This is also true as we summarize the duties of the *General* Spiritual Assistants.

1. *For all that concerns the OFS as a whole, the altius moderamen must be exercised by the **general ministers** collegially.*

2. *It belongs to the Conference of **General Ministers** of the First Order and TOR:*

- a. to take care of the relations with the Holy See concerning the approval of legislative or liturgical documents, which need to be approved by the Holy See.*
- b. to visit the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS;*
- c. to confirm the election of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.*  
*(cf. Article 8.2 in the Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS).*

3. *Each **General minister**, for his own Order, sees to the interest of the religious for the OFS and to their preparation for service to it according to their respective Constitutions and the Constitutions of the OFS.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 89.1, .2, .3

2a. *the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS requests the general assistant from the respective general Minister.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 91.2a

1. *The **general Ministers** exercise their office towards the OFS in accordance with the universal law of the Church, with their own Constitutions and with full respect for the specific laws of the OFS. They have the faculty to establish, visit, and meet with local OFS fraternities which are assisted by their own Order.*

2. *In relation to his own Order, it is the responsibility of each general Minister:*

- + to appoint the general Assistant of the OFS, who, under the authority of the general Minister, looks after all things regarding service to the OFS.*
- + if needed, to confirm or appoint the national assistants belonging to his own Order.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 9.1, .2

1. *The **general Assistants** are appointed by their respective general Minister, after consultation with the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.*

2. *They give their service to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, form a conference, and collegially see to the spiritual assistance to the OFS as a whole.*

3. *It is the responsibility of the **Conference of General Spiritual Assistants**:*

- a) to collaborate with the International Council and its Presidency in the spiritual & apostolic animation of the OFS and in a special way in the formation of secular leaders;*
- b) to co-ordinate, at the international level, the spiritual assistance to the OFS and the Franciscan Youth;*
- c) to foster the interest of the friars and their Superiors in the OFS and in the Franciscan Youth;*
- d) to provide for the pastoral visits of the National councils of the OFS and the presence at the national elective chapters.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 17.1, .2, .3

1. *The **general assistant** must keep his general Minister and his Order informed on the life and activities of the OFS and Franciscan Youth.*

2. *He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order to the OFS and Franciscan Youth, meet with local fraternities assisted by his own Order and keep constant contact with the assistants of his own Order.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 18.1, .2

**COMMENT:** On the international level, the General Spiritual Assistants serve the OFS throughout the world. The Conference of General Spiritual Assistants collaborate with the Presidency of the OFS in providing leadership to the OFS throughout the world.

1. The request for a general spiritual assistant is made by the Presidency of the OFS to the general Ministers of the 1st Order and the TOR. These four appointees serve as the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants.

2. They serve at the disposition of their general Minister.

3. The **Conference of General Spiritual Assistants** make a visitation of the national fraternities once every six years, as indicated by the OFS General Constitutions:

2. *With the consent of the appropriate council, the request for the fraternal visit as well as the pastoral visit is made:*

*b. by the national minister at least every six years, to the presidency of the International Council of the OFS and to the Conference of General Assistants.*

*c. by the general minister, at least every six years, to the conference of General Ministers.*

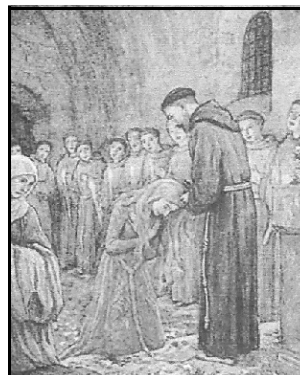
OFS General Constitutions - Article 92.2b, .2c

4. The Conference of **General Ministers** of the 1st Order and the TOR take care of OFS relations with the Holy See in regard to the approval of legislation and liturgical documents which need that approval.

5. The Conference of General Spiritual Assistants deals with issues and problems presented to them by spiritual assistants from the various Conferences of National Spiritual Assistant(s). Spiritual assistants may also have recourse to the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants when a lower level's decision is not acceptable to them. Remember the **principle of subsidiarity** i.e. issues/problems are settled at the lowest level possible. Only when that fails is recourse had to the next higher level of authority. Requests for clarification of issues may also be presented to the Conference of General Assistants.

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*Co-responsibility arises, not from inability  
or lack of government or animation  
on the part of the Secular Franciscans,  
but rather from the charism, which needs  
to express the manifold riches poured out  
by the Spirit upon the Franciscan family  
through Francis, a man of profound ecclesial vision.  
In order to be joyful and communicative,  
this ecclesiology must bear the  
sign of mission and proclamation  
through the apostolic life  
of the Lesser Brothers,  
through the contemplative life  
of the Poor Clares,  
and through the family life  
and social action  
of the Secular Franciscans.*





## PASTORAL VISITATION OF FRATERNITIES ON ALL LEVELS

**COMMENT:** The purpose of visitations is clear. Do your best to *stimulate, encourage and animate the Franciscan evangelical spirit*. The following texts offer guidelines for a pastoral visitation

1. The **Pastoral visit** is a privileged moment of communion with the 1st Order and the TOR. It is carried out **in the name of the Church** and serves to guarantee and promote the observance of the Rule and Constitutions and fidelity to the Franciscan charism. The visit is carried out with respect to the organization and the law proper to the OFS itself.

2. Having verified the canonical establishment of the fraternity, the visitor will give attention to the relations between the fraternity and its spiritual assistant and the local Church. The visitor will meet with the pastors (Bishop or parish priest) when this is opportune for fostering communion and service for building up the Church.

3. The visitor will promote collaboration and a sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the religious assistants. The visitor is to examine the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited fraternity, encourage the spiritual assistants in their service and promote the continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.

4. The visitor will give special attention to programs, methods and experiences of formation, to the liturgical and prayer life, and to the apostolic activities of the fraternity.

OFS General Constitutions - Article 95.1, .2, .3, .4

1. The **pastoral visit** is a privileged moment of **communion of the 1st Order and the TOR with the OFS**. It is carried out **in the name of the Church** and serves to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of unity of the OFS and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.

2. The visitor strengthens the fraternity in its presence and mission in the Church and in society; verifies the relation between the secular and religious fraternities; gives special attention to programs, methods, and experiences of formation; gives attention to the collaboration and sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the spiritual assistants; examines the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited fraternity; encourages the spiritual assistants in their service and promotes their continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.

3. At the request of the respective council, a delegate of the Conference of Assistants carries out the **pastoral visit**, fully respectful of the OFS's own organization and law. For urgent and serious reasons or in case of failure on the part of the minister or the council to request it, the pastoral visit may be carried out upon the initiative of the conference of spiritual assistants, having consulted the Council of the OFS of the same level.

4. It is recommended that the pastoral and fraternal visits be carried out together, with agreement beforehand on the program. The visitor or visitors will in good time communicate the object and the program of the visit to the council concerned. (Most of the following is done by the fraternal visitor). They will examine the registers and the records, including those relating to previous visits, to the election of the council and to the administration of goods. They will draw up a report of the visit they have conducted, appending it to the records in the appropriate register of the fraternity visited, and will inform the council of the level which has conducted the visit.

5. In the visit to the local fraternity, the visitor or visitors will meet with the entire fraternity and with the groups and sections into which it is divided. They will give special attention to the brothers and sisters in formation and to those brothers and sisters who may request a personal meeting. Where required, they will proceed to the fraternal correction of the shortcomings possibly encountered.

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 14.1, .2, .3, .4, .5

**COMMENT:** *Pastoral visitations* help to promote the Franciscan charism and maintain the connections within the Franciscan family. The *pastoral and fraternal visitors* are responsible for the many elements of a visitation, including a post-visitation report sent *within a month* after the visitation. *The RSA or CNSA can delegate someone to make a visitation, but that person must be **qualified and knowledgeable**.*

1. Local and regional visitations are held once every three years. A visitation should guarantee and promote the observance of the OFS Rule and Constitutions as well as fidelity to the Franciscan charism and the Church. The visitor(s) verify the canonical establishment of the fraternity and its relationship to the Church, society, and the spiritual assistant(s) of the fraternity. Individual seculars may wish to meet with the a visitor. The *pastoral visitor* gives attention to formation programs as well as the fraternity's prayer life, liturgical practices and apostolic activities.

2. The *pastoral visitor* promotes collaboration and co-responsibility between the secular council and the spiritual assistant(s). The *pastoral visitor* promotes the continuing pastoral and spiritual formation of SAs in order to "assist" them; to get their insights about the condition of the fraternity(s); and to discover ways to help one another. The *pastoral visitor* dialogues with the entire gathering of the whole fraternity and spiritual assistant(s) at a pastoral visitation. The visited fraternity provides adequate time for everything that needs to be done at a *pastoral* visitation. Councils schedule sufficient time to accomplish the goals of a visitation, especially time for *ongoing formation*.

3. It is permissible to do the *fraternal or pastoral visitations* at different times. This alternative gives more time for both the fraternal and pastoral visitor to accomplish their goals. If the visitation is done together, the visitors can do one post-visitation letter done collaboratively or two post-visitation letters done separately. Each visitation team makes these decisions when setting the schedule for visitations. The post-visitation letters should be sent to the visited fraternity *within one month* after the visitation. *Nine to twelve months after the visitation, the visited fraternity council reports to the visitors on the council's implementation of suggestions, recommendations or corrections in the post-visitation letter(s).*

4. **We urge that elections and visitations NOT be done on the same dates.** Elections should generally precede the visitation by at least six months. This gives the new council time to get acquainted with their fraternity and their council duties. The old and new councils may dialogue and come to a mutual decision on the timing of the pastoral and/or fraternal visitation.

A *Regional pastoral visitation* requires careful use of time. *Regional visitations* begin on Friday evening by meeting with the Regional executive council. While the REC meets with the visitor(s), the REC can have a prepared program for Regional fraternity members on Friday evening. (This is good use of time at the chapter.) Saturday morning is time for chapter business (kept to a minimum of necessary issues); Saturday afternoon is time given to the visitors, with Eucharist some time at or after 4:00 PM. On Saturday evening the visitors can facilitate an *open forum* with the attendees (including observers). Dialogue requires people to both LISTEN and share! On Sunday morning there may be some need for chapter business (Short). On Sunday morning the entire community gathers to share ideas and questions that may have surfaced during the visitation. A form of *round table discussion* can be an effective use of time. *Dialogue with the visitors beforehand allows the schedule to be adjusted for special regional needs.*

5. While *Local fraternity visitations* are usually much shorter, the efficient use of time is even more important. The meeting with the council requires at least an hour or more. There should be plenty of time for the visitor(s) to share *ongoing formation* with the whole fraternity. Getting good information on the formation programs of the fraternity is very important.

# Please dialogue with the visitors to settle the schedule for a visitation. Work out difficulties or prepare for various needs of the fraternity and the visitors. ***The National executive council has developed a brochure for Visitations.*** Get a copy to find other helps in preparing for *pastoral and fraternal visitations*.

# In ALL VISITATIONS the concerned council sends each visitor a copy of the **previous post-visitation letter** and a copy of the **most recent annual report**.



**RITE of INSTALLATION  
FOR A SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT (A model)**

**The President:** 1. Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the province to which the local fraternity is bonded;  
- or - 2. The Regional spiritual assistant;  
- or - 3. Someone delegated by the Provincial SA or Regional SA.

\* The new spiritual assistant stands in the presence of the community \*

**President:** *In the name of the Lord, Amen ... We begin with Hymn # \_\_\_\_\_*  
+ Words of welcome by the president (The community & SA are seated during this time).

**1st reader:** - *A reading from the OFS General Constitutions (Article 89.3):  
The local spiritual assistant is to be a witness of Franciscan spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious towards the Secular Franciscans, and to be a bond of communion between the 1st Order or Third Order Regular and the Secular Franciscan Order.*

**2nd reader:** - *A reading from the Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS (Article 23.2)  
The local assistant fosters communion within the fraternity and between the fraternity and the First Order or the Third Order Regular. In harmony with the local guardian or superior, the assistant sees to it that between the religious and the secular fraternities a real life-giving union with each other exists. He or she fosters the active presence of the fraternity in the Church and society.*

**3rd reader** - *A reading from the first letter of John (1 John 3:18, 4:7-8, 4:12)  
Children, love must not be a matter of theory or talk; it must be true love which shows itself in action. ... My dear friends, let us love one another, because the source of love is God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God, for God is love. ... God has never been seen by anyone, but if we love one another, he himself dwells in us; his love is brought to perfection in us.*

**Reader:** *The Word of the Lord.*  
**ALL:** **Thanks be to God.**

**President:** *I invite the local (or regional / or national) minister to read the letter of appointment of the spiritual assistant.*

**Local minister:** *reads the letter.*

**President:** *In the name of the 1st Order or TOR (Choose one), I install you, \_\_\_\_\_ name \_\_\_\_\_ as the spiritual assistant of \_\_\_\_\_ N.N. \_\_\_\_\_ fraternity. I thank God for your willingness to serve your Franciscan brothers and sisters. Let us listen to the words of the Gospel*

During the reading of the Gospel the SA stands before the community which extends its hands over him/her while the Gospel is read.

**4th reader** - *A reading from the holy Gospel according to John (John 15:7-10, 11-12, 16-17)  
ALL: Thanks be to God*

*If you dwell in me, and my words dwell in you, ask whatever you want, and you shall have it. This is how my Father is glorified: you are to bear fruit in plenty and so be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. Dwell in my love. If you heed my commands, you will dwell in my love. ... I have spoken thus to you, so that my joy may be in you, and your joy complete. This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. ... You did not choose me, I chose you. I appointed you to go on and bear fruit; fruit that will last. ... This is my commandment to you: love one another.*

**Reader:** *The Gospel of the Lord*  
**ALL:** **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**



\*A *short* reflection/welcome from the presider & the minister\*

**All are seated** + Presider offers a reflection

+ The local fraternity Minister offers a word of welcome to the new spiritual assistant.

**Presider:** *Let us pray for the new spiritual assistant ... Quiet moment ...*

*Praise be yours, O Lord, for the love and concern you show the Franciscan family. Look kindly on N.N. as he/she begins his/her service to this fraternity. May the gifts of wisdom and understanding, knowledge and counsel, inner strength and honest holiness be his/hers in serving this fraternity. May he/she experience the wonder of your presence among us. Holy Spirit, guide his/her life and ministry. We ask this in the name of Jesus.*

**ALL: Amen**

\* The community comes forward to offer the SA a sign of welcome and peace \*

+ **Closing song** \_\_\_\_\_ / followed by a reception



In the case of the installation of a regional spiritual assistant or national spiritual assistant, the following texts are used at the proper places (in the rite for installing a local SA) - indicated by the numbers of the reader.

+ **For a Regional SA:** (Use the following texts:)

**1st reader:** *The **regional assistant(s)** ... give their service to the regional council and see to spiritual assistance to the regional fraternity. If there are more than one, they form a conference and render their service collegially.*

Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - Article 21.2

**2nd reader:** *It is the responsibility of the Conference of regional assistants, or to the regional assistant if there is only one: + To collaborate with the regional council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and of society in the region, and in a special way in the formation of leaders. + To provide for the pastoral visits of the local councils of the Secular Franciscan Order and to ensure a presence at local elective chapters. + To coordinate, at the regional level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the assistants and the fraternal union among them. + To foster the interest of the friars in the Secular Franciscan Order and in Franciscan Youth.*

Ibid - Article 21.3

**3rd reader:** *The regional assistant must keep the major superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the Secular Franciscan Order and of the Franciscan youth in the region. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order in the region and keep constant fraternal contact with the local assistants of his own Order.*

Ibid - Article 22.1, .2

\* Continue with the ritual for a local spiritual assistant beginning with the text for **Reader #4** \*



+ **For the National Spiritual Assistant(s)**

Text for installing National Spiritual Assistant(s). Please replace readers 1 and 2 (in the installation of a local SA) with the following text:

**1st Reader:** *It is the responsibility of the **Conference of National Spiritual Assistants:***

+ *To collaborate with the national council in the task of spiritual and apostolic animation of the secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and the society of the country, and in a special way in the formation of the leaders.*

+ *To provide for the pastoral visits of the regional councils and to ensure presence at the regional*

- + *To coordinate, on the national level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of assistants, and fraternal union among them;*
- + *To foster the interest of the friars in the Secular Franciscan Order and in the Franciscan Youth.*

Ibid - Article 19.3

\* Continue the ceremony with **reader # 4** in the ritual for installing a local SA \*

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*Those guiding the Rite of Installation ceremony  
may adjust or edit this text in ways that enhance the ritual*

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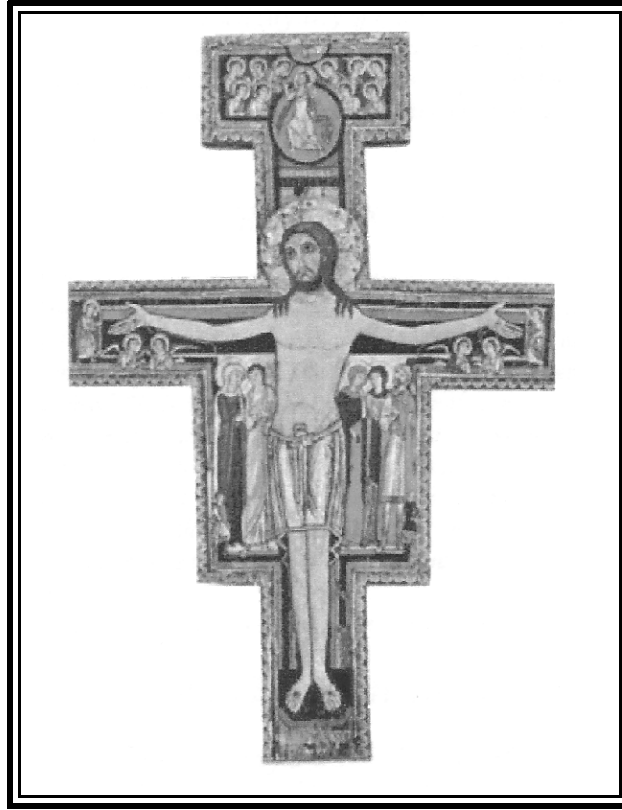
..



*Do not be afraid, little flock,  
for it is the Father's good pleasure  
to give you the kingdom.  
Sell your possessions, and give alms.  
Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out,  
an unfailing treasure in heaven,  
where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.  
**For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

Luke 12: 32-34

## THE SAN DAMIANO CRUCIFIX



**San Damiano Crucifix**

An unknown Umbrian artist painted the Crucifix in the 12th century. There is a strong Syrian influence, and history tells us that there had been some Syrian monks in the area. It is painted on wood (walnut) to which cloth had been glued. It is about 190 cms high, 120 cms wide and 12 cms thick. It is more than likely it was painted for San Damiano to hang over the altar as the Blessed Sacrament was not reserved in non-Parish churches of those times and especially those that had been abandoned and neglected as we know San Damiano had been. In 1257 the Poor Clares left San Damiano for San Giorgio and took the crucifix with them. They carefully kept the Cross for 700 years. In Holy Week of 1957, it was placed on public view for the first time over the new altar in San Giorgio's chapel in the Basilica of St Clare of Assisi.

For Eastern Christians the Icon is a representation of the living God, and by coming into its presence it becomes a personal encounter with the sacred, through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The San Damiano icon is then a personal encounter with the transfigured Christ - God-made-man. The crucifix contains the story of the death, resurrection and ascension into glory. It expresses the total and universal Paschal Mystery of Christ. It invites us all to take part in it with a lively and lived faith, just as St. Francis did. Christ's saving death is shown in John's Gospel in its serene majesty, and this Crucifix portrays this in picture form. It is not surprising that St. Francis was attracted to the icon and the inspiration for his life came from this Christ who spoke to him: "*Go repair my Church ...*"

## # INCORPORATING OFS MEMBERS OF OTHER RITES OR LANGUAGE

**COMMENT:** The General Spiritual Assistants, at the request of CNSA, addressed the goal of incorporating all Seculars and Secular Franciscan fraternities into the national/regional structure of the OFS in the United States. It is our common task (CNSA, NAFRA & NEC) to guide the regions in accomplishing this integration of various Secular Franciscans who belong to another Catholic rite or who speak a language other than English. Here is the response from Samy Irudhaya OFM Cap, in the name of the Conference of the General Spiritual Assistants to the OFS.



*Pace E Bene,*

*June 30, 2004*

*1. It is very clear from the Constitutions of the OFS that any local fraternity in the USA must be part of the National Fraternity of the USA. It should be integrated with the National Fraternity. They may be Koreans, Vietnamese (and others), and the people of the Syro-Malabar rite from India, and all have to be integrated with the National fraternity of USA. In article 28.3 (OFS General Constitutions) mention is made of personal fraternities (constituted for specific and valid reasons recognized in the decree of establishment). These fraternities are established for reasons of language, particular liturgical rite in the Church or because of their particular position in life. Such PERSONAL fraternities are likewise subject to the higher fraternities of the OFS. These fraternities can exist but under the approval and guidelines of the National Fraternity in the USA. Article 34 clearly states that these fraternities may be established within the fraternity under the guidance of one council. National statutes may establish criteria suitable for the formation and functioning of these sections or groups. For the valid establishment of this personal local fraternity, at least five perpetually professed members are required.*

*2. Spiritual assistance of these groups: They can still remain as members of their province or country but once they are in the USA they belong to the fraternity in the USA. Any spiritual assistant from their own country or from their own rite cannot give spiritual assistance to them without the permission of the major superiors of that province where they are and the major superiors in turn can appoint anybody or that same person. Those members should be well integrated with procedures in the USA. The national Fraternity must spell out criteria pertaining to these issues in its statutes.*

*3. The Spiritual assistant is not a director but an assistant. The fraternity council is the authority in fraternity life. Your perception is correct. This is what the Constitutions say. We go by the Constitutions. It is better to give formation to the members and often put them in relation with the regional council and invite them into the regional council and regional meetings. They can speak their own languages in their internal circle but when they participate in the regional meetings they will have greater possibilities to open their minds. It is a question of relationship and it takes much time.*

*4. It will take a lot of patience and tolerance. Tolerance is the spirituality today by which we maintain unity and peace. These fraternities need much initial and ongoing formation. It takes time. Your efforts and God's graces will do wonders and gradually bring them into one Franciscan family.*

*Yours Fraternally*

***Samy Irudhaya OFM Cap***

Samy Irudhaya OFM Cap

Capuchin General Spiritual Assistant

## # WAYS OF COMMITMENT TO THE SPIRIT OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

**COMMENT:** These recommendations are made in response to a number of situations in which individual secular Franciscans also wished to make profession in another form of Franciscan life. Since the OFS has a right to determine the status of members committed to the OFS, the following recommendations were developed. Some thoughts on "affiliates" are also included.

1. There are many responses to St. Francis of Assisi. People of various faith traditions find ways to follow his spirit. Within our Catholic faith tradition there are many ways for people to follow the Spirit of St. Francis. We rejoice at the attraction that St. Francis has among so many people. But we need to be clear about the consequences of belonging to the OFS - a particular Franciscan way of life. Many Catholic groups develop a way of life in the spirit of Francis and ask its members to commit to that way of life. We believe that Catholics ordinarily make a commitment to only ONE such group. When a Catholic professes his/her total life to the OFS way of following Francis of Assisi, that person cannot be part of another Franciscan group that requires a similar commitment. OFS members (for example), cannot belong to the 1st Order, 2nd Order or TOR of St. Francis or another public association of the faithful. Commitment to two different expressions of a way of life confuses one's commitment and seems not to make sense. Franciscans choose one way to follow the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi. **Amen!**

2. A Catholic belonging to the OFS (specifically approved by the Church - a Public Association of the Faithful), may not simultaneously belong to groups like the "*Brothers and Sisters of Penance*," or "*Franciscan Tertiaries of the Immaculata*," or other groups (Catholic or non-catholic) who profess alternate expressions of Franciscan life. Being faithful to ONE PUBLIC ASSOCIATION of the Franciscan way of life creates enough commitment for anyone. However, *collaboration* on various issues is certainly possible and encouraged.

3. The Anglican/Episcopal faith tradition has a Third Order Society of St Francis (TOSSF). There is an Order of Ecumenical Franciscans (OEF) for people of various faith traditions. We rejoice at the personal dedication of these groups. However, we do not accept individual members into the OFS if they are not Catholic, nor, if they are Catholic, are committed to another Franciscan group within the Church. We *collaborate* with these other groups to expand the Franciscan spirit in the world. But because of our profession in the OFS we do not become members of these groups. One commitment is sufficient.

4. Franciscan Youth are part of our OFS family. The above considerations do not apply to them.

*3. The members of the Franciscan youth consider the Rule of the OFS as an inspirational document for the growth of their own Christian and Franciscan vocation either individually or in a group. After a suitable period of formation, of at least one year, they confirm this option with a personal pledge before God and in the presence of the brothers and sisters.*

*4. The members of Franciscan Youth who wish to belong to the OFS should satisfy the requirements of the Rule, the Constitutions, and the Ritual of the OFS.*

*5. The Franciscan Youth, as a component of the Franciscan family, requests from the competent secular leaders and religious superiors, respectively, fraternal animation and spiritual assistance.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 96.3, .4, .5

5. Many religious congregations develop groups known as "associates" or "affiliates" with varying degrees of attachment to the particular religious community.

*13. Affiliation with a local fraternity.*

*a. those who, without belonging to the OFS, wish to participate in its life and activities (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 53.5 and 103.1) according to Franciscan principles and teachings, may be welcomed by the local fraternity, so as to make their communion living and effective.. Individuals wishing to become affiliates should make their desire known by a written*

*request to the local fraternity council, which makes a decision regarding the request.*

- b. These affiliate brothers and sisters will have no juridical bond with the Secular Franciscan Order and are, therefore, persons welcomed to love and be loved "as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ." (OFS Rule - #13). They may share the experiences and activities of the fraternity, without the right to vote.*
- c. In order that the identity of the fraternity not be altered, the number of affiliates may not exceed 40% of the number of active professed members of the fraternity.*
- d. Regional councils have the right to establish their own guidelines for the acceptance of affiliates.*

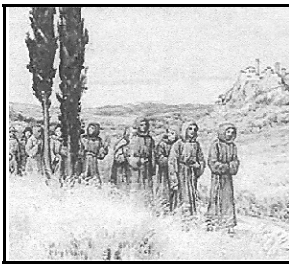
USA Statutes of the National Fraternity of the OFS - Article 13.a, .b, c, .d

**COMMENT:** When dealing with affiliates it is important to ascertain if their "*attachment*" as an affiliate to a religious congregation is a "*way of life*" or simply a "*generic attachment*." If the affiliation requires a profession of some sort, follow the ideas on #2 on page 35. Fraternity councils will dialogue with the individual to determine his/her status in connection with a congregation.

Each individual case is different. Local councils need to act prudently. Not everyone who asks for affiliation needs to be granted affiliation. Discernment may suggest that an affiliate will be a good addition to the fraternity. Another affiliate candidate may be a poor candidate for a variety of reasons. Local councils use discernment tools from *initial formation* before accepting individuals as affiliates. This is the **responsibility of the local councils**. In addition, the council should make it clear to the affiliate his/her limitations and rights in regard to fraternity life.

# In addition, if a *regional executive council* wishes to write guidelines for accepting affiliates, they are free to do so. Clear guidelines can be helpful for the local fraternities when affiliate questions arise.

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*The whole idea of St. Francis was that the Little Brothers should be like little fishes who could easily go freely in and out of that net. They could do so precisely because they were small fishes and in that sense even slippery fishes. There was nothing that the world could hold them by; for the world catches us mostly by the fringes of our garments, the futile externals of our lives. One of the Franciscans says later, "A monk should own nothing but his harp," meaning, I suppose, that he should value nothing but his song, the song which it was his business as a minstrel to serenade every castle and cottage, the song of joy of the Creator in his creation and the beauty of the brotherhood of men. In imagining the life of this sort of visionary vagabond, we may already get a glimpse also of the practical side of that asceticism which puzzle those who think themselves practical.*

*A man had to be thin to pass always through the bars and out of the cage; he had to travel light in order to ride so fast and so far. It was the whole calculation, so to speak, of that innocent cunning, that the world was to be outflanked and outwitted by him, and be embarrassed about what to do with him. You could not threaten to starve a man who was ever striving to fast. You could not ruin him and reduce him to beggary, for he was already a beggar. There was a very lukewarm satisfaction even in beating him with a stick, when he only indulged in little leaps and cries of joy because indignity was his only dignity. You could not put his head in a halter without the risk of putting it in a halo.*

St. Francis of Assisi - G.K. Chesterton - Image Books - Page 103-104

## # RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE COUNCIL OF A SPONSORING FRATERNITY

1. The sponsoring fraternity council (SFC) assumes the guidance of a *newly-forming* fraternity. The council of the sponsoring fraternity is responsible to have members of their council at each gathering of the newly forming fraternity. Councilors take turns attending these sessions, developing good relationships with the new people. The sponsoring fraternity's council votes to accept people to stages of growth and to perpetual profession. For councilors to lack personal knowledge is inexcusable. It can create future problems for a new fraternity. Council discernment discovers that some new people may not have a vocation to the OFS, while others embrace our way of life with sound qualities of understanding.

2. After the *orientation* phase and certainly before *candidacy* (when the new group is more stable), the sponsoring fraternity council initiates the process of getting a 1st Order/TOR province to accept the newly-forming group and provide them with a spiritual assistant. This allows the *newly-forming* group to work with a SA and develop normal fraternity relationships with the 1st Order/TOR. This issue should NOT be put off until the group is ready to be *canonically established*. Canonical establishment requires that the *emerging-fraternity* is bonded to a province of the 1st Order/TOR. The province assumes the *altius moderamen* of the *newly-forming* fraternity. The province also provides a spiritual assistant. This action is required by the Church. It should be done early in the process.

3. A formation team from the sponsoring council is responsible for the *orientation* and *initial formation* of the *newly-forming* group. They conduct initial formation sessions, using the *For Up to Now* manual as a resource for the formation team. (The *For Up to Now* {FUN} manual is NOT to be used as a formation text. It is a resource for the formators). At present we suggest *The Franciscan Journey* by Lester Bach OFM Cap as a text for the people in initial formation. The formation team develops a well-tuned formation program. The team guides newcomers in a formation process that enables their growth in the Franciscan spirit.

The sponsoring fraternity council (which includes the SA) evaluates the progress of the newcomers. When they discern that they are prepared to move on, the sponsoring fraternity council approves newcomers to move to *inquiry* and later, to *candidacy*. A ritual is used for the steps of *welcoming* and *admission* (Pages 9 and 11 in the Ritual). The sponsoring council votes on the acceptance of candidates for permanent profession. *The minister of the sponsoring fraternity accepts the profession of the new people.*

4. Throughout their period as the sponsoring fraternity council they guide the *newly-forming* group, doing what is necessary to initiate people into the OFS rule and life. They welcome them to join the sponsoring fraternity at gatherings. They invite them to regional meetings, workshops or similar events. They encourage their participation in apostolic activities and working with Church and social issues that are part of regional or local fraternity life. As far as possible the sponsoring council offers opportunities to enrich leadership skills among the members of the *newly-forming* fraternity.

5. As the *candidacy* period of initial formation nears its end (at least 6 months before that time) the sponsoring fraternity council invites the Regional executive council to conduct a **fraternal and pastoral visitation** of the *newly forming* group. The REC assesses the *newly-forming* group's readiness to become an *emerging-fraternity*.

6. At this point the sponsoring council consults with the members of the *emerging-fraternity* and recommends people (to REC) to form a council to serve as leaders of the *emerging-fraternity*. The recommendations are sent to the REC for approval. The REC then approves the ***emerging-fraternity's council*** members for a term of three years. During this period the sponsoring fraternity mentors the council (including the SA) - preparing them for the fraternity's future after *canonical establishment*.

7. Near the end of the three year period the new council seeks approval from REC for the *canonical establishment* of the *emerging-fraternity*. A regional visitation must be held. The sponsoring council and the *emerging-fraternity's* council collaborate in the preparations for the *canonical establishment*.

8. About a year *after its canonical establishment* the new fraternity may hold its first elections.

## # PROCESS FOR ESTABLISHING A NEW FRATERNITY

**COMMENT:** People wishing to establish a new fraternity need at least five people as candidates. (It would seem more realistic to have closer to 10 people. With only 5 permanently professed people the fraternity will all be councilors with no fraternity members for them to serve). The REC responds to the initial request by assigning an established fraternity and its council to serve as the sponsoring fraternity to a newly-forming group. The total process of preparation to become a *canonically established* fraternity can take up to 6 years.

# OFS = Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis

### Documentation

*1. The fraternity of the OFS finds its origin in the inspiration of St. Francis of Assisi to whom the Most High reveals the essential gospel quality of life in fraternal communion.*

*2. Rule 20 The "OFS is divided into fraternities of various levels," the purpose being to promote, in an orderly form, the union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters and their active and communal presence in both the local and universal Church. The OFS shall also support the commitment of the fraternities in their service to the world, and specifically to the life of society.*

*3. The brothers and sisters gather in local fraternities established in connection with a church or religious house, or in personal fraternities, constituted for specific and valid reasons recognized in the decree of establishment.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 28.1, .2, .3

*2. Rule 20 These fraternities, that each have their own juridical personality in the Church, should acquire, if possible, a civil juridical personality for the better fulfillment of their mission. It pertains to the national councils to give guidelines concerning the motivations and the procedures to be followed.*

Ibid - Article 29.2

*1. Rule 21 "On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister (President)." These offices are conferred through elections, in accordance with the Rule, the Constitutions and their own statutes. Only by way of exception or in the first phase of their establishment may fraternities exist without a regular council. The council of the higher level will make the arrangements necessary for this inadequate situation only for the specific amount of time it takes to get a fraternity back on sure footing or to establish a new fraternity; to give its leaders the proper formation and to carry out an election.*

Ibid - Article 31.1

*1. Rule 22 The **canonical establishment** of the local fraternity belongs to the competent religious major superior at the request of the brothers and sisters concerned and with the prior consultation and collaboration of the higher level to which the new fraternity will be related according to the national statutes. The written consent of the local Ordinary is necessary for the canonical establishment of a fraternity outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the 1st Order or the TOR.*

*2. For the valid establishment of a fraternity, at least five perpetually professed members are required (Please note that we encourage more, perhaps about ten perpetually professed members - cf. Comment at the top of this page). The admission and profession of the first brothers and sisters will be received by the council of another fraternity or by the council of a higher level which will have provided for their formation in appropriate ways. The acts of admission and profession and the decree of establishment are preserved in the records of the fraternity. Copies are sent to the council of the higher level.*

Ibid - Article 46.1, .2

*1. Rule 23 Each local fraternity, the primary cell of the one OFS, is entrusted to the pastoral care of the religious Franciscan Order that canonically established it.*



2. *A local fraternity may pass to the pastoral care of another religious Franciscan Order in the ways determined by the national statutes.*

Ibid - Article 47.1, .2

2. *The provisions of articles #46 and #47 of the OFS General Constitutions shall govern the canonical establishment of new fraternities and determine the Franciscan friar province which assumes pastoral care.* (cf. Statutes for Spiritual & Pastoral Assistance to the OFS - article 6.1 and article 11.2)

USA National Statutes - Article 18.2

### **Beginning a fraternity**

People who wish to establish a new OFS fraternity contact the Regional Executive council of the area. These individuals initiate the process of establishing a new fraternity with the guidance of the Regional Executive Council of their area. After serious dialogue with the requesting group(s), the REC gives or withholds its approval. If approval is given, the following steps are to be taken.

1. The REC attaches the newly-forming group to a sponsoring fraternity council. A member of the new group is selected to be a non-voting liaison to meetings of the sponsoring fraternity council. If no fraternity is available, the REC assumes the role of the sponsoring fraternity.

After the initial steps are taken, and the *newly-forming* group has achieved some cohesiveness (After orientation - a short time before candidacy), contact with the Provincial or Provincial Spiritual Assistant of a 1st Order/TOR Province is made. This will be the Province to which the fraternity will be bonded. When a Provincial or PSA accepts the *altius moderamen* for the *newly-forming* group, a spiritual assistant is appointed to the *newly-forming* group. This is done early in the process so that the new people become familiar with the SA as a part of fraternity life.

2. The sponsoring fraternity's formation team and council proceed with the process of *orientation* and *initial formation* in the manner they would for their own fraternity. The formation team members and some councilors should regularly attend and guide the formation sessions. Other councilors can take turns attending these sessions. Getting to know the newcomers is important and assists in discerning the vocation of new people. In a practical way the National Statutes (Article 19 - USA National Statutes) provide the length of time for the various phases of formation. The time-frames in b), below, apply if you use *The Franciscan Journey* as your formation book. If more time is needed for any phase - TAKE IT!

a) Minimum - Orientation - 3 months / Inquiry - 6 months / Candidacy - 18 to 36 months - **Total** = 27 to 45 months

b) Using *The Franciscan Journey* - Orientation - 3 months / Inquiry - 6 months / Candidacy - 24 months - **Total** = **33 months**

The formation team can extend any phase when there are good reasons to do so. It is better to take more time rather than rush through the sessions. Initial formation is more than an intellectual exercise. Formation team members need to observe personal changes in newcomers: in their opinions, theological perceptions, ways of viewing life, dealing with emotions, relating to others, and embracing Franciscan values in daily life. Members of the council can 'assist' in the formation session's dialogue and aid in the discernment process. As time passes, newcomers engage in the ministries of the sponsoring fraternity and attend the sponsoring fraternity's regular gatherings. It helps newcomers to experience fraternity life. If the REC is the sponsor, they need to work out the implementation of the above requirements.

3. During formation the sponsoring fraternity members develop relationships with the new people. The formation team and council approve newcomers to move into the various stages of *initial formation*. Use the rituals at the beginning of each phase (cf. Ritual - pages 9 & 11). When *candidacy* nears completion (within 4 to 6 months), each candidate is instructed to write a letter to the council of the sponsoring fraternity. They request profession (or not) and give reasons for their request. At about 6 to 7 months before the end of *candidacy* the sponsoring fraternity invites the REC to make a **fraternal and pastoral visitation** of the *newly-forming* group. The REC experiences the *newly-forming* group's growth and receives information and personal contact. It will help them make informed decisions about the *future* of the *newly-forming* group leading to their identity as an *emerging fraternity*.

As the time for Profession draws near, the sponsoring fraternity prepares and provides time for a retreat or some other spiritual program to prepare the candidates for profession. **The minister of the sponsoring fraternity receives their profession.** The record of profession is kept in the appropriate register of the *newly-forming* fraternity. There ought to be *at least* five permanently professed Franciscans in the fraternity. (Remember the caveat in the notes at the top of page 38 concerning the number of perpetually professed).

### The Emerging Fraternity

1. After the pastoral and fraternal visitation, the REC determines the readiness of the *newly-forming* group to become an *emerging fraternity*. The sponsoring fraternity (Having consulted the members of the emerging fraternity), recommends people to be members of the council of the *emerging fraternity*. The REC receives the recommendations of the sponsoring fraternity council (after they have consulted the members of the emerging fraternity). REC then appoints a council of the permanently professed members of the *emerging fraternity*. The new fraternity council picks the official name for the fraternity if this has not yet been done, The REC notifies the PSA of the Province to which the *emerging fraternity* is bonded.

2. The council of the *emerging fraternity* enters into a written agreement for the *altius moderamen* with the friar province previously chosen i.e. the friar province to which they are bonded. This confirms what has already been done. But it is done by the council of the *emerging fraternity* and not the council of the sponsoring fraternity.

3. The friar provincial minister or PSA informs the local bishop about the *emerging fraternity* and its future status as a canonically established fraternity in his diocese..

4. The Regional executive council informs the National executive council and CNSA of the existence of the *emerging fraternity* as well as its name, where it meets, and who is the contact person for the fraternity.

5. For the next three years the *emerging fraternity* functions like a fraternity. While still attached to the sponsoring fraternity, it functions on its own, **mentored by the sponsoring fraternity as needed.** It has regular council and fraternity gatherings, promotes vocations to the OFS, has an initial formation program, provides opportunities for inter-action at its regular gatherings as well as inter-acting with other fraternities in the region. The members attend regional or district meetings and fully participate in the life of the OFS. The council deals with issues, makes semi-annual reports to the REC and sponsoring fraternity, handles financial matters as well as paying its "fair share." This three year period serves as an internship in functioning as a fraternity. The sponsoring fraternity continues its mentoring role as needed. The *emerging fraternity's council* provides a written semi-annual report to the sponsoring fraternity and the regional executive council. The *emerging fraternity* is not yet canonically established!

During this three year period candidates for profession are evaluated by the *emerging fraternity's* council. This council then makes a recommendation to the sponsoring fraternity's council for acceptance to profession. Upon the sponsoring fraternity's council's approval for profession, *the minister* of the sponsoring fraternity (or his/her delegate) receives the profession of the candidates. The record is kept in the register of the *emerging fraternity*. The words of profession in the Ritual (Page 23-24) *must be used* by all fraternities. Usually profession is done at a Eucharist unless no priest is available. In that case a suitable ritual is designed for profession but without changing the profession formula in the ritual.

6. Near the end of the three year period, the *emerging fraternity* council invites the Regional executive council and Regional Conference of Spiritual Assistants to conduct a *fraternal and pastoral visitation* of the *emerging fraternity*. The PSA of the province which assumed the *altius moderamen* may also be invited to visit. The visitors ascertain the viability of the *emerging fraternity*, its faithful observance of the OFS Rule and Constitutions, its compliance with regard to minutes of meetings, the register of professions; financial records and the manner of conducting formation sessions - both initial and ongoing, and the co-ordination between SA and council. With this approval the *emerging fraternity* council, through a written request to the REC (and the PSA), seeks the *canonical establishment of the fraternity*.

### The Canonical Establishment

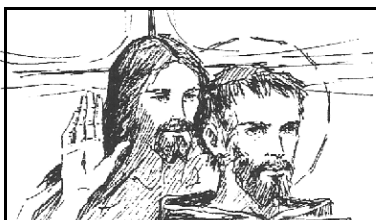
The Regional Executive Council acts on the request of the *emerging fraternity* to be *canonically established*.

- a. The REC provides the necessary information and requests and obtains from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (through their secretary) the formal document of establishment, making four (4) copies thereof. The regional minister signs and dates the four copies and sends them to the appropriate friar provincial minister or PSA together with the written request to canonically establish the fraternity.
- b. The friar minister provincial or PSA gives his approval and signs and dates the four copies. He sends the documents to the Bishop (Ordinary) of the diocese where the fraternity will be located. He asks the Bishop to give his approval and sign the documents. The Bishop returns the signed documents to the PSA or Provincial who proceeds with the canonical establishment of the fraternity with the proper documentation and ritual celebration.
- c. Meanwhile, the *emerging fraternity* arranges for the ceremony of *canonical establishment* in conjunction with the REC, the sponsoring fraternity, the friar minister provincial or PSA of the province to which the fraternity is bonded and, if customary, the Bishop of the Diocese.

The ceremony of *canonical establishment* is celebrated according to the Ritual (Page 44ff) During the ceremony the document of establishment (4 copies) is signed and dated by the friar minister provincial (or his PSA) and by the witnesses.

One copy is sent to the REC to be kept in the regional archives; one copy is sent to the provincial minister of the friar province with the *altius moderamen*; a copy is sent to the diocesan chancery for filing; one copy remains in the records of the newly *canonically established* fraternity in accord with article 49.1 of the OFS General Constitutions.

- d. The regional minister informs the National Executive Council of the canonical establishment of the new fraternity with all pertinent information.
- e. After one year as a canonically established fraternity it conducts its first elections and proceeds as a fully recognized fraternity of the region. The regional minister (or appointed delegate) conducts these elections which are witnessed by the Regional Spiritual Assistant or his/her delegate.



*They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:*

- + Rule 7 - *in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation;*
- + Rule 4.3 - *open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situations, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel;"*
- + *in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 8.2

## # GUIDELINES FOR A CELL GROUP IN A FRATERNITY

*Where the situation and the needs of the members require it, sections or groups which gather members having particular needs, common interests, or the same choices, may be established within the fraternity under the guidance of one council.*

*Such groups can give themselves specific norms relative to their meetings and activities, firmly remaining faithful, however, to the requirements that arise from membership in the one fraternity. National statutes may establish criteria suitable for the formation and functioning of these sections or groups.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 34

*Establishment of sections or cells*

- a. *Should one or more groups desire to establish permanent sections within a local fraternity based on particular needs or common interests, they may do so subject to the direction of the local Fraternity Council (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 50.2.d) so long as they continue to participate fully in the local fraternity's fraternal and apostolic life. The Regional fraternity will receive notice of the formation of such groups.*
- b. *Such sections remain subject to the local fraternity as constituent parts of it. (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 34 -above)*

USA National Statutes - Article 18.5.a, .b

We (CNSA) make the following recommendations for cells or sections within one fraternity.

1. A cell group may include people who wish to meet more than once a month in a more home-like setting or who may be linked to a special apostolate or ministry.
2. A cell group exists for the good of its members and the local fraternity. The cell people continue to support the activities and financial needs of the local fraternity as well as attending at least some of the regular gatherings of the local fraternity. The cell is part of the local fraternity. It may be good to spell out these issues in a written document when a cell is started. It is too easy for cell members to begin to withdraw from local fraternity life instead of nourishing it.
3. Initially the local fraternity council may appoint someone to lead the cell group. After the group is firmly established the members may choose individuals (taking turns) to lead the cell or section. Such action helps to develop leadership. A local fraternity council may determine that one member of the cell become a non-voting member who attends the local Fraternity Council meetings as mutually determined.
4. A cell should see itself as contributing to the vibrancy of the local fraternity. This can only be accomplished if the members of the cell attend the local fraternity's gatherings with some regularity. It is important for cell leaders and the fraternity council to maintain both good communication and good relationships. It is ONE FRATERNITY and it expects all its members to contribute energy, ideas, support and financial "fair share" to the local fraternity.
5. Problem issues shall be mediated through common dialogue between the cell and the local fraternity council - the sooner, the better.
6. Should the cell wish to become an independent fraternity, they dialogue with their fraternity council and devise a plan for achieving this goal. Read the process for establishing a new fraternity in this *Handbook* (Page 38 ff). Follow the directions that apply to your situation. This process takes time but it is time well spent.

*It was not liturgy that drew me. It was not theology or doctrine (I didn't know anything about that); it was the witness of Catholic Christians who were really making a difference in people's lives that made me interested in the Catholic Church.*

In my own Words - Thea Bowman FSPA - Page 31

## # SOME OPTIONS FOR A STRUGGLING FRATERNITY

**COMMENT:** A fraternity can be struggling to survive in a number of ways. If it is determined that it can no longer actually survive as a functioning fraternity, there are a number of options open to the members and the fraternity itself. Some possibilities are listed here.

1. The members of a struggling fraternity may have the fraternity de-activated and transfer their membership to an active fraternity and become fully participating members of that fraternity.
2. The members of a struggling fraternity may have their fraternity de-activated, transfer their membership to an active fraternity, ordinarily participate in the activities of that fraternity, but maintain some self-autonomy by gathering occasionally on their own, in accordance with article 34 of the OFS General Constitutions (cf. below). Dialogue with the chosen fraternity can determine guidelines for this.
3. The members of the struggling fraternity may have their fraternity de-activated, transfer to an active fraternity, but establish themselves as a cell or satellite of an active fraternity in the spirit of article 34 of the OFS General Constitutions and according to the norms or guidelines established by the regional fraternity. They may have one of their members attend the council meetings of the active fraternity as a non-voting member, representing the needs of the cell or satellite.

### Article 34

*Where the situation and the needs of the members require it, sections or groups which gather members sharing particular needs, common interests, or the same choices, may be established within the fraternity under the guidance of the one council.*

*Such groups give themselves specific norms relative to their meetings and activities, firmly remaining faithful, however, to the requirements which arise from membership in the one fraternity. National statutes may establish criteria suitable for the formation and functioning of these sections or groups.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 34

### Article 18

#### 5. Establishment of sections or cells

*a. Should one or more groups desire to establish permanent sections within a local fraternity based on particular needs or common interests, they may do so subject to the direction of the local Fraternity Council (cf OFS General Constitutions - article 50.2d), so long as they continue to participate fully in the local fraternity's fraternal and apostolic life. The Regional Fraternity will receive notice of the formation of such groups.*

*b. Such sections remain subject to the local fraternity as constituent parts of it. (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 34)*

USA National Statutes - Article 18.5a, 5b

4. It is possible that none of the above scenarios fit an individual fraternity. ***When a fraternity is de-activated the members of that fraternity remain full-fledged secular Franciscans.*** They may choose to join a nearby fraternity or be unable to attend any gatherings of any fraternity. The REC then makes certain that they are cared for. The REC may do that through personal action or by inviting a local fraternity to keep in touch with these seculars who can no longer attend gatherings. The key goal for the REC is to keep the relationship alive. Your concern lets these seculars know that they are important and that you continue to show that through your loving care for them.



## # DE-ACTIVATING A FRATERNITY

**COMMENT:** Fraternities sometimes come to a point when they can no longer function as a vibrant fraternity. Various reasons contribute. Sometimes the members grow older and can no longer attend regular gatherings. Sometimes there is no one to serve on a fraternity council. Sometimes the burden of operating like a full-fledged fraternity is more than the members can handle. Fraternities may isolate themselves from regional structures and attempt to function independently. Reasons such as these may lead to the realistic decision by the Regional Executive council to ask the PSA to de-activate the fraternity.

*1. In the case of cessation of a fraternity, the patrimonial goods of the same, the library and the records are acquired by the fraternity of the immediately higher level.*

*2. In the case of revival (re-activation) according to canonical laws, the fraternity will repossess any remaining goods, its own library and records.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 48.1, .2

### COMMENTS:

1. When a canonically established fraternity is no longer viable, for whatever reason, it can be declared de-activated **by the Provincial Spiritual Assistant** of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded. This is done in collaboration with the Regional Executive Council and Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants or an individual RSA.

2. The official de-activation may follow this procedure:

- a. The Conference of Regional Assistants and the Regional executive council make a pastoral and fraternal visit to the fraternity. They dialogue with the members about the options available to the fraternity, of which de-activation is one. They ask the members of the fraternity to consider the options prayerfully and to communicate their decision within 60 days of the fraternal and pastoral visitation. The fraternity informs, in writing, the Regional Executive Council and the Conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants (or Assistant if there is only one) of their decision.
- b. The Regional Executive Council records the decision and its recommendation from the visitation. This information is forwarded to the PSA of the province to which the fraternity is bonded. The recommendation of the Conference of Regional Spiritual assistants (or Assistant if there is only one) is likewise sent to the appropriate PSA.
- c. The PSA, if he agrees with the recommendation, issues the decree of de-activation to the fraternity minister with copies sent to the regional minister and the local bishop. If he decides NOT to de-activate the fraternity, he initiates a dialogue with the REC and the fraternity until a final decision is reached and implemented.

3. The common fund and other assets are either disposed of according to the decision of the remaining members or put in an interest bearing escrow account managed by the Regional Executive Council. A copy of the document of establishment of the fraternity and date of its de-activation, plus a list of active members, is sent to the archives of the friar province, the regional fraternity and the appropriate diocese.

4. When a fraternity is de-activated, the juridic person of the fraternity remains intact for 100 years after the last fraternity member dies. Such a fraternity can be revived if new members wish to re-activate it and it can function as a fraternity. The PSA of the province who de-activated the fraternity can re-activate it if all requirements are met. (cf. Canon 120 - Page 82 in this *Handbook*)

5. While de-activation touches the responsibilities of a fraternity, it does NOT remove the individual responsibilities that come from Profession in the OFS. ***The individual members remain committed to the OFS way of life.*** They maintain that commitment, gathering together if possible, or transferring to a nearby local fraternity, maintaining communication with the Regional Executive Council and offering whatever support they can to the OFS. Their commitment to the OFS way of life remains intact.

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## # RE-ACTIVATING A FRATERNITY

1. According to canon law (canon 120 - cf. Page 82), a canonically established fraternity of the OFS remains "alive" and cannot be dissolved until 100 years after the death of its last member. Therefore, any fraternity that has been de-activated may be re-activated during this period of 100 years in the following manner:

- a. by *at least* five (preferably more cf. Page 38 - Comment)) permanently professed members of the fraternity.
  - b. by a new group of at least five (preferably more) permanently professed members who are willing to assume the juridic personality of the fraternity and responsibility for the fraternity.
2. To re-activate the fraternity a minimum of five (preferably more) professed members are needed.
- a. They meet together and fulfill the necessary requirements just as though they were a *newly forming* group and then becoming an *emerging* fraternity according to the guidelines for establishing a new fraternity (cf. page 38 ff in this *Handbook*).
  - b. Upon the discretion of the Regional Executive Council, the maximum period of re-activation may be shortened.
  - c. If the fraternity to be re-activated was suspended, any requirements of the probation or censure must be fulfilled before the process of re-activation can officially begin.
  - d. The members formally request the Regional Executive Council, in writing, to be officially re-activated as an already canonically established fraternity. The Regional Executive Council makes a fraternal and pastoral visitation. If they approve the request, the Regional minister verifies the canonical establishment of the fraternity and asks the PSA, of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded, to issue the written decree of re-activation. Copies are sent to the fraternity, the regional executive council, and the local bishop.
  - e. The Regional Executive Council returns all remaining goods of the fraternity as well as remaining financial assets and records to the re-activated fraternity.
  - f. A ceremony of re-activation is celebrated liturgically and socially.

### N.B.

#1. If those wishing to form a new group already belong to a fraternity and are professed, they submit a written request to their fraternity asking to start a new group. The local fraternity council acts on the request and, if approved, the minister of the fraternity informs the Regional Executive Council of this action. The REC approves the group to become a *newly forming* group or a re-activated fraternity.

#2. If those wishing to form a new group do not belong to an existing fraternity or are not professed, they submit a written request to the Regional Executive Council. If approved, the *newly forming* group is assigned a sponsoring fraternity within the regional area. If any people who are part of the new fraternity are permanently professed and belong to a fraternity, the minister of the sponsoring fraternity informs that fraternity and seeks the person's official transfer to the sponsoring fraternity. This process is also true for professed members wishing to separate from an existing fraternity. If no local fraternity can sponsor the group, the Regional Executive Council accepts the role of sponsoring fraternity.

#3. Though the documents mention that *at least* five professed members are needed either to begin a fraternity or to re-activate one, common sense indicates that it is more realistic to have closer to ten professed members in both cases. Otherwise everyone (5) would be on the council of the emerging fraternity and there would be no members to serve - a case of a council with no one for them to serve.

**# GUIDELINES FOR SUSPENDING  
A CANONICALLY ESTABLISHED FRATERNITY**  
*or suspending individual fraternity members*

A canonically established fraternity can be suspended for the following reasons:

- a. because of repeated and prolonged default of the members in their corporate obligations for life in a fraternity or observance of the Rule or fidelity to the Franciscan Charism. (**What applies to an individual applies also to a fraternity**):

*The repeated and prolonged default in the obligations of the life of the fraternity and other conduct in serious opposition to the Rule have to be discussed by the council in dialogue with the person at fault. Only in the case of obstinacy or relapse may the council decide, with a secret vote, to suspend someone. It communicates its decision in writing to the person concerned.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 56.2

- b. serious opposition or obstinacy toward the mandates of the OFS Rule, General Constitutions and particular statutes.
- c. the communal public rejection of the faith or the communal defection from ecclesiastical communion.
- d. a communal act which is grave, external, imputable, officially documented and juridically proven. (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 58.3):

*The brother or sister who publicly rejects the faith, or defects from ecclesiastical communion, or upon whom an excommunication is imposed or declared, **by the fact itself** ceases to be a member of the Order. This does not mean, however, that the council of the fraternity should not discuss the matter with the person concerned or offer fraternal help. The council of a higher level, upon request of the council of the local fraternity, collects the proofs and officially declares that the person has ceased to be a member of the Order.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 58.3

2. The suspension of a fraternity is officially incurred in the following manner.
  - a. The conference of Regional Spiritual Assistants (or assistant if there is only one) take the initiative to conduct a pastoral visitation and the REC conducts a fraternal visitation;
  - b. As a result of the visitation(s), if the reasons for suspension are not corrected by dialogue & personal presence, the Regional Executive Council issues three warnings signed by the regional minister and the president of the Conference of Regional Assistants (or assistant if there is only one), each one at least three months after the preceding;
  - c. If the warnings produce no positive results, the Regional Executive Council discerns whether to request suspension from the Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the friar province to which the fraternity is bonded. They record their discernment in the REC minutes;
  - d. The regional minister communicates, **in writing**, the request and advice of the Regional Executive Council to the appropriate Provincial spiritual assistant;
  - e. The Provincial spiritual assistant of the friar province to which the fraternity is bonded enacts the decree of suspension and sends it to the suspended person, the fraternity minister, and copies to the regional minister and the local bishop.
3. When a fraternity is suspended:
  - + provisions will be made, assisted by the regional executive council, for active fraternity members to transfer membership to the nearest active fraternity (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 55).

*If a brother or sister, for any reasonable cause, desires transfer to another fraternity, he or she first*



*informs the council of the fraternity to which he or she belongs, and then makes the request, including the reasons for the transfer, to the minister of the fraternity to which he or she wishes to belong. The council makes its decision after having received the necessary information, in writing, from the fraternity of origin.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 55

- + Article 56.2 of the OFS General Constitutions (below) is to be followed for the **temporary suspension** of individual members of the fraternity from life in fraternity.

*The repeated and prolonged default in the obligations of the life of the fraternity and other conduct in serious opposition to the Rule have to be discussed by the council in dialogue with the person at fault. Only in the case of obstinacy or relapse may the council decide, with a secret vote, to suspend someone. It communicates its decision, in writing, to the person concerned.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 56.2

- + Article 58.2, .3, .4 of the OFS GC (below) is to be followed for the **definitive dismissal of an individual member of the fraternity from the OFS.**

*2. In case of serious causes, provided that they are external, imputable, and juridically proven, the minister or the assistant of the local fraternity, with charity and prudence, discuss the matter with the brother or sister concerned and keep the council informed. The brother or sister is given time to reflect and to discern, eventually with the help of an external and competent expert. If the time set aside for reflection passes without any result, the council of the fraternity requests the council of the higher level to dismiss the brother or sister from the Order. The request must be accompanied by all the documentation relevant to the case. The council of the higher level will issue the decree of dismissal after having collegially examined the request with the relevant documentation and having verified observance of the directives of the Law and the Constitutions.*

*3. The brother or sister who publicly rejects the faith, or defects from ecclesiastical communion, or upon whom an excommunication is imposed or declared, **by the fact itself**, ceases to be a member of the Order. This does not mean, however, that the council of the fraternity should not discuss the matter with the person concerned or offer fraternal help. The council of a higher level, upon request of the council of the local fraternity, collects the proofs and officially declares that the person has ceased to be a member of the Order.*

*4. The decree of dismissal or the declaration that the person has ceased to be a member of the Order, in order to become effective, must be confirmed by the national council to whom all documentation will be sent.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 58.2, .3, .4

- + The goods of the suspended fraternity, its library and records are acquired by the regional executive council and kept in the regional fraternity's archives.
  - 1. In the case of cessation of a fraternity, the patrimonial goods of the same, the library and the records are acquired by the fraternity of the immediately higher level.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 48.1
- + The common fund and other assets of the suspended fraternity are to be put in an interest-bearing escrow account managed by the regional executive council.
- + A copy of the document of establishment (with the date of suspension recorded on it) and a copy of the last list of active members are to be sent to the archives of the friar province to which the fraternity is bonded, to the archives of the regional fraternity, and to the archives of the diocese.

- + The local Ordinary of the diocese where the fraternity has been established is to be notified of the suspension and the reasons for it by the Provincial Spiritual Assistant or the Provincial minister.

CNSA - February 21, 1994 (Revised - 2005)

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### Spiritual assistance and its role in the OFS

*The Rule of Paul VI (1978) takes a decisive step, moving from submission of the OFS to the First Order and the TOR to; life-giving union with each other. "In various ways and forms but in **life-giving union** with each other; they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church." After stressing the "organic union of all Catholic fraternities," the particular characteristics of their secular life and their autonomy, the Rule once again mentions "communion and co-responsibility" in the charism of the common Seraphic Father, calling for "suitable and well-prepared religious for spiritual assistance." from the four religious Franciscan families.*

*The text of the Pauline Rule begins by recalling that the Secular Franciscans are not an appendage but an integral part of the Franciscan Family. It ends with a request for spiritual assistants to the superiors of the First Order and the TOR, as something flowing from one and the same charism.*

*The General Constitutions of the OFS, definitively approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic life, reaffirm and clarify these concepts in article 85: "As an integral part of the Franciscan Family and called to live the charism of Francis within the secular dimension, the OFS has particular and close relations to the First Order and the TOR." By reason of these bonds, which have existed for centuries, the Church has entrusted to the superiors of the Franciscan religious Orders the *altius moderamen* mentioned in canon 303, in other words, the spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS.*

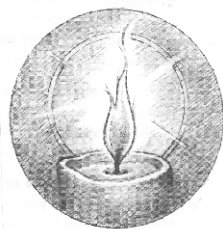
Manual for Spiritual Assistants - General Spiritual Assistants - Section IV - #1.2

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*If at times the provincial ministers or the assistants are ignored by the Secular Franciscans, this is not the fault of the OFS or the Church, which recognizes it as an international and public association of the faithful. It could be the fault of individual Secular Franciscans who are arbitrarily interpreting the innovations that have taken place, or it could be the fault of the provincial ministers and assistants themselves, who do not know the Church's legislation concerning the OFS or are unwilling to enforce it.*

*It can happen that the Secular Franciscans are opposed to a spiritual assistant because he acts like the old spiritual assistant of a Third Order Fraternity, thinking that the local OFS Fraternity "belongs" to him or to his Order. A priest will certainly meet opposition if he has failed to grasp the difference between a spiritual director of the old Third Order and a spiritual assistant of today's OFS. But this does not give the Secular Franciscans the right to exclude him from meetings of the fraternity council. If they have problems with him, they should report their difficulties to the OFS regional council ...*

Ibid - Section IV - # 2.2.2



**#TRANSFERRING A FRATERNITY TO THE *Altius Moderamen* OF ANOTHER FRIAR OBEDIENCE (Province)**

**COMMENT:** As the presence of friars in particular areas changes, grows, or diminishes, it is wise to consider the transfer of the *altius moderamen* (higher direction) of a fraternity to the care of another friar Obedience (Province) who may be able to serve the Seculars. Fraternities may also transfer for other reasons. Here is the process to follow.

1. The minister of the fraternity wishing to transfer to the care of another friar province, writes both to the provincial spiritual assistant of the province of origin and the receiving province detailing the reasons for the transfer. He/she also provides copies of pertinent information and includes a copy of the Document of establishment or a verification of canonical establishment of the fraternity.
2. The same fraternity minister, with the consent of the council of the fraternity asks the Regional minister and the Regional spiritual assistant(s) of the region (to which it presently belongs), to write letters of recommendation to the provincial spiritual assistant of the friar province to which the fraternity desires to transfer.
3. The provincial spiritual assistant of the friar province to which the fraternity is bonded writes to the provincial spiritual assistant of the receiving province, giving his consent for the transfer. The provincial spiritual assistant of the receiving province then gives his consent for the transfer in writing.
4. If the provincial spiritual assistant of the receiving friar province accepts the transfer of the *altius moderamen*, he issues an official letter, in the name of the friar provincial minister, to accept responsibility for the *altius moderamen* of the fraternity and appoints a spiritual assistant for the fraternity (if needed), having consulted the concerned fraternity council.
5. It is important to inform the REC of any region involved as well as informing NEC and the personnel who maintain the data-base, of the change.

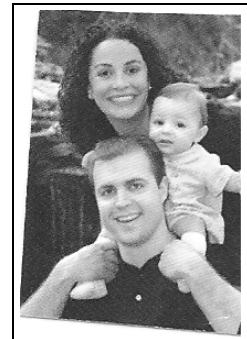
CNSA - July 31, 1995 / Revised - 2005 & 2012

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## HOPE

*God is the foundation of hope; not any god, but the God who has a human face and who has loved us to the end, each one of us and humanity in its entirety. His Kingdom is not an imaginary hereafter, situated in a future that will never arrive; his Kingdom is present wherever he is loved and wherever his love reaches us. His love alone gives us the possibility of soberly persevering day by day, without ceasing to be spurred on by hope, in a world which by its very nature is imperfect. His love is at the same time our guarantee of the existence of what we only vaguely sense and which we nevertheless, in our deepest self, we await; a life that is "truly" life.*

*Saved In Hope (Spe Salvi)* - Benedict XVI -  
Paragraph 31





## ISSUES & REFLECTIONS

CNSA

**COMMENT:** The following pages contain recommendations and reflections of the CNSA and from other resources on issues brought to our attention both by spiritual assistants and secular Franciscans. Obviously, the CNSA recommendations can be changed or adjusted by CNSA. Changes made by CNSA in the future will be edited into these pages. These are common-sense recommendations and reflections. They are NOT laws!

1. Usually these recommendations are the result of a considerable amount of discussion among the members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants, as well as researching the topic. When new situations arise, there may be a need to change the CNSA recommendations. Working together we can keep this HANDBOOK as an up-to-date resource for spiritual assistants as well as other members of the OFS.
2. If national, regional, local councils or other secular Franciscans recognize a need to change some of these recommendations, we expect that they will initiate a dialogue with CNSA. The elements of daily life do not remain forever the same. It is a normal part of "assisting" one another that new information or experiences will require changes or adjustments. Both CNSA and the people who desire to change something can help by sharing ideas and reasons with one another. Dialogue will keep us on the same page as we share information and insights with one another.
3. Our dialogue about issues in this *Handbook* reflect the same attitudes and ideals that govern all of our relationships. We follow a Trinitarian spirituality that focuses on ways and means to maintain relationships while we make changes in practices or processes in our Franciscan life. Respect is called for. Dialogue is expected. Understanding is our goal. We work together to make our fraternal life more faithful to the OFS Rule. Prayerful dialogue is something that is normal for Franciscans. In a spirit of dialogue we can share our Franciscan vision through both words and example with other people. We do this with a loving heart, realizing how true it is for people to say of us: *Look how they love one another!*

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*Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
 give us miserable ones the grace  
 to do for You alone  
 what we know You want us to do  
 and always to desire what pleases You.  
 Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened,  
 and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,  
 may we be able to follow  
 in the footprints of Your Beloved Son,  
 our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 and, by Your grace alone,  
 may we make our way to You,  
 Most High, Who live and rule  
 in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,  
 and are glorified God Almighty,  
 forever and ever,  
 Amen*

*A Letter to the Entire Order*  
 Francis of Assisi - The Saint - Vol I - Page 120-121



Artist - Silvio Amelio  
 Assisi



It is the mind of the CNSA that:

1. ministry to prisoners is a ministry for OFS members. We encourage such ministries to those who are called to it. Many forms of Christian education and relationships can be offered to people in prison to deepen their sense of worth. However, it is NOT our OFS task to bring them to formation nor profession in the OFS;
2. individuals who are in prison can learn about our charism. But the time for their initial formation in the OFS should come after their release. Then they are free to begin the needed formation for entrance into the OFS in a fraternity of their choice (cf. #4 below);
3. it is difficult for individual persons in prison to be part of a common formation program within the Franciscan community or engage in apostolic ministries. Common fraternal life is very important for formation. We strongly recommend that persons in prison NOT enter OFS initial formation or become professed members of the OFS while they are in prison. They can, however, learn the values of a Franciscan life that the Holy Spirit may bring;
4. when individuals are in prison for life, the friendship and love of OFS members is a beautiful gift to them. It can lead them to the desire to embrace the Franciscan spirit in prison, living the spirit of Francis in ways available to them. We generally would not recommend that they make profession in the OSF. Walking with them and supporting their continuing journey is our way to show them love. We trust our loving God to gift them with the gifts needed to live the Franciscan spirit in prison. Profession in the OFS is not necessary for them to be touched with the Franciscan spirit. The supportive presence of secular Franciscans in the prison ministry will be an important relationship for them.

*Edited Text from 2008*

Secular Franciscans are encouraged to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to those in prison in whatever way is most effective in local circumstances. When isolated individuals honestly and sincerely express an affinity to the Way of St Francis of Assisi, they may associate themselves informally with a OFS community until such time as they are released from prison and are *free* to enter the OFS. Then they can engage in the entire formation program, discern their vocation, and become full-fledged members of OFS in the same way that others do.

**COMMENT:** Prisoners can learn about St. Francis, practice and even live a Franciscan spirit in prison without entering the OFS. The requirements of prison life make it difficult for people in prison to experience regular fraternal life in an OFS fraternity. The regular support and love of secular Franciscans is important for their growth and for deepening their sense of personal worth. We encourage secular Franciscans, who are called to this ministry, to minister with love and compassion. Let that love lead them to help prisoners recognize the call of Jesus and the Gospel. We need not expect them to enter initial formation while they are in prison. Making profession in isolation from fraternal life does neither the prisoner nor the fraternity any favors. Profession obligates the fraternity to offer continuing support to the prisoner wherever he/she may be. The fraternity may not always be able to offer such support.



Difficulties can arise if the person in prison is moved to another facility or released from prison. It may be impossible to continue the kind of support that was originally given. The prisoner may choose to live elsewhere after release from prison. If the individual senses a vocation to the OFS, he/she can freely enter the initial formation program of an accepting fraternity. During initial formation they discern their vocation the same as any other applicant. We trust our loving God to lead them to new ways of living. If they respond to God's love,

God will certainly bless their efforts to live a Christian life..



## QUALITIES TO CONSIDER

when electing or appointing formation directors

+ With thanks to Anne Mulqueen OFS:

1. Formation directors and team members are dedicated to their ministry and consider it a response to the call of the Spirit and the expressed need of the fraternity they serve. They are familiar with the Franciscan charism and can interpret the charism in the light of the signs of the times and the needs of the Church and society today.
2. Formation persons possess, or know where to find, the information to share with others. They have the qualities needed for their ministry of formation. The *For Up to Now* manual is a natural part of the resources for formators and assists formators in their work. **(It is NOT a text for newcomers to the OFS!)**
3. Formation persons experience the transforming power of the Gospel in their lives. They communicate both information and abstract concepts clearly and experientially. Formation persons are aware of their own experiences and motives and are careful not to impose their opinions and expectations on others as a sort of "dogma." Sharing is open-ended as a way to assist newcomers to understand the Franciscan way of life.
4. Formation persons need to have time to prepare for and conduct formation sessions. Local formators know that a major goal of formation is to incorporate the candidates into fraternity life and help them to a personal embrace of the Franciscan spirit in all they say and do.
5. Formation persons are able to correct mis-information in a respectful manner that does not injure a candidate's self-esteem or dignity.
6. Formation persons, at all levels, communicate with the spiritual assistant, the fraternity council, and the whole fraternity. They collaborate in their ministry. Formation persons share important and creative endeavors with the higher councils (regional and national), and to 1st Order/TOR major superiors.

### ***A CHECKLIST in choosing good resources for formation.***

#### **Qualities of a good text**

- A) Good texts will have references to Vatican II, the 1978 Rule, the General Constitutions, the National Statutes, the Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS. The OFS texts can be found in the book: *The Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order*. Leaders should have a copy of *The Essential Documents of the OFS* available as a resource.
- B) Resources should convey clear information on the nature of the secular Franciscan vocation with clarity about the permanent and secular aspects of this vocation. It should point out that formation is a never-ending process. Initial formation is only the beginning of a secular Franciscan's lifetime journey to God. Learning about and applying the OFS Rule in daily life is a regular requirement.
- C) Resources refer to the essential elements of formation: a) the Gospel; b) the OFS Rule; c) Franciscan writings; d) Church documents, especially Vatican II; e) the subsequent Church documents on the role of the laity in the Church; f) resources that provide opportunities to apply acquired insights and knowledge into practice in daily life - transforming the lives of people in formation.
- D) Resources need clear examples of secular Franciscan spirituality and apostolic involvement, especially regarding social and Church issues in modern times. It emphasizes that our vocation commits us to living the Gospel in fraternity, in a communal way of life, rather than a life of private piety lived in isolation from other secular Franciscans.
- E) Resources accentuate how, in daily life, we follow Francis and Clare of Assisi; a) through a process of ongoing conversion; b) in community; c) as secular people; d) in life-giving union with all Franciscans. Initial formation texts should reflect on the rites and ceremonies experienced during initial formation.



## EUCCHARIST and the MONTHLY GATHERING

**COMMENT:** This text comes from Benet Fonck OFM in response to a question about whether it is required that the Eucharist be celebrated at every regular gathering of the local fraternity.

November 7, 2001

It is true that Article 14.2 of the General Constitutions (GC) states: *The Eucharist is the center of the life of the Church. Christ unites us to himself and to one another as a single body in it. Therefore, the Eucharist should be the center of the life of the fraternity. The brothers and sisters should participate in the Eucharist as frequently as possible.*

It is also true that Article 53.2 states: *They should come together **periodically** (emphasis mine) as an ecclesial community to celebrate the Eucharist in a climate which strengthens the fraternal bond and characterizes the identity of the Franciscan Family.*

And the footnote to Article 42.3 indicates that profession ought to take place during the Eucharist.

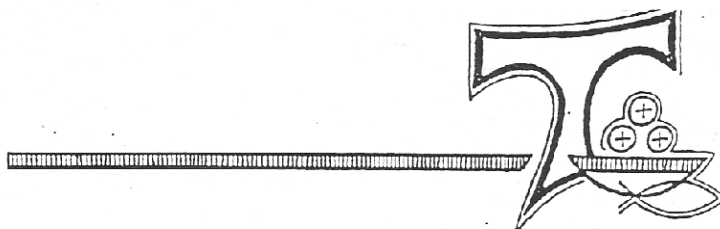
Yet, Article 24 of the OFS Rule points out: *To foster communion among the members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community... (and) should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life in fraternity.*

So, Article 53.1 builds on this idea by stating: *The Fraternity must offer its members opportunities for coming together and collaborating through meetings to be held with as great a frequency as allowed by the situation and with the involvement of all its members.* The General Constitutions picks up on the idea of ongoing-formation in Article 44.2: *The fraternity has the duty to help its own members with programs of continuing formation: a) to listen to and meditate on the Word of God, going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel, b) to reflect on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions; c) to realize and deepen the Franciscan vocation.*

What does all of this say? Though the Eucharist is central in the life-style and mind-set of the Secular Franciscans and ought to be part of the fraternity's gathering on a periodic or occasional basis, like at professions or special events, it is not meant to be a part of the regular and frequent meetings of the fraternity because that has a different objective all together. The objective - according to both the Rule and the General Constitutions - is what the French call a *review of life* or a faith-sharing based on the Word (not Eucharist) to nourish and strengthen the apostolic, ecclesial, and Franciscan dimensions of OFS life.

Peace

*Benet Fonck OFM*





1. CNSA *recommends* that OFS deacons or priests ordinarily not serve as ministers of fraternities.
2. CNSA *encourages* deacons/priests, if *suitable and well-prepared*, to be willing to serve as spiritual assistants to fraternities.

February 25, 1998

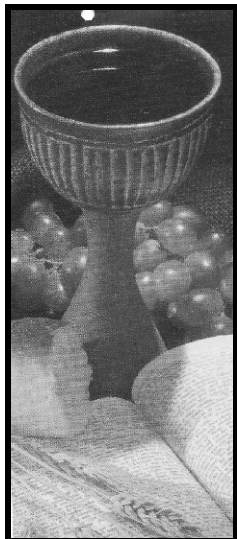
**COMMENT:** Deacons (and other clergy), who are secular Franciscans, are able to be elected to office as a minister or other offices of a fraternity or to be appointed as a spiritual assistant. However, permanent deacons and diocesan priests (working in parishes or diocesan offices) have a primary duty to the diocese and the Bishop of the diocese in which they minister or (for deacons) to the pastor in a parish where they minister. The workload is often dependent on the Bishop and/or pastor and his view of the diaconate. Hence, each situation requires personal attention by councils and nominating committees. If the workload is heavy, it can be difficult for a deacon or diocesan priest to serve as a minister or SA of a OFS fraternity. A fraternity expects their minister to have a focus on service to the fraternity. If they are appointed as spiritual assistants the same expectations exist. It is a difficult role if the time of a deacon or priest is heavily occupied in fulfilling diocesan or parochial responsibilities. In addition, deacons and priests must be *suitable and well prepared* for becoming a SA to the OFS.

It is permissible for a permanent deacon or diocesan priest to serve as a local or regional minister. In these cases it is wise, with honest dialogue, for councils and/or nominating committees to prayerfully discern (with the deacon or priest) whether the OFS ministry can be competently fulfilled in a particular case. Discernment is a positive action to discover whether this particular individual will be able to competently serve in a particular OFS ministry or not. Otherwise both the person who serves and the fraternity that is served may find themselves in a difficult situation. Gentle dialogue and honest sharing on all sides can achieve a realistic conclusion. Every situation is different and must be explored so that people are not overburdened by their ministries nor kept from ministries to which they are called.

If it becomes apparent that the role of SA becomes too burdensome, the individual can resign, informing the PSA. If the resignation is accepted, the fraternity council can then make a written request to the PSA (of the province to which the fraternity is bonded) for a new SA, indicating the reasons for the request.

Adjustments made by CNSA in 2012

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*Receive the oblation of the holy people,  
to be offered to God.  
Understand what you do,  
imitate what you celebrate,  
and conform your life  
to the mystery of the Lord's cross.*

Prayer at Ordination Rite





A spiritual assistant, whether a Franciscan friar or not, by virtue of his/her appointment, is the link of union between the OFS and the 1st Order and TOR. The spiritual assistant is a guarantor of the Franciscan charism and spirituality in the name of the friars. An OFS spiritual assistant does not represent the secular Franciscans. A member of a particular religious congregation or diocesan clergy does not represent their Order or the diocese. Rather, they serve as a link to the Franciscan 1st Order/TOR. They serve as a sign of communion between the Franciscan 1st Order/TOR and the OFS. This requirement of the Church reflects what the Church calls the *altius moderamen*.

According to Article 89.2, .3, .4 of the OFS General Constitutions, anyone (friar, man or woman religious, diocesan cleric or Secular Franciscan) properly prepared and appointed by the provincial minister or PSA, is a local spiritual assistant with full rights and obligations. Being a witness for elections is not limited to these people. But often they may be the first to be considered.

*Who can be a witness?* A friar or non-friar spiritual assistant can be delegated to witness elections in the name of the Church and the Franciscan family. Spiritual assistants from the Franciscan Family may be delegated for this role (cf. Article 76.2 of OFS General Constitutions). Permanently professed members of the OFS, competent and in good standing, can also be delegated as a witness for elections.

**An important point:** Ordinarily a secular Franciscan SA is not permitted to witness elections for his/her own fraternity of membership. If, because of urgency or necessity, a professed member of the OFS is delegated to witness elections in his/her own fraternity of membership, he/she foregoes the right to active and passive voice in those elections. They cannot cast a ballot nor be elected to a position of leadership at that particular elective chapter.



### From the Documents:

2. *The elective assembly, or chapter, will be presided over by the minister of the immediately higher level, **or by his or her delegate**, who confirms the election.*

*The president or the delegate cannot preside over the elections in his or her local fraternity, nor the elections of the council of a higher level, of whose council he or she is a member.*

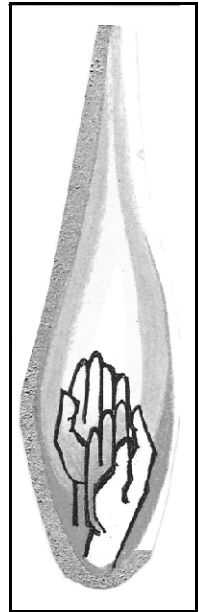
*The spiritual assistant of the immediately higher level **or his delegate** is to be present as a witness of the communion with the First Order and the TOR.*

*A representative of the conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR presides at and confirms the elections of the Presidency of the international Council of the OFS.*

3. *The president of the chapter and the assistant of the higher level **do not** have the right to vote.*

4. *The president of the chapter designates, among the members of that chapter, a secretary and two tellers.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 76.2, .3, .4





## WITNESSING ELECTIONS

1. The *presider* for local elections is the minister of the immediately higher level (OFS General Constitutions - Article 76.2) or his/her delegate. For regional elections it is someone from the National executive council. For national elections someone from the Presidency presides. In each case the SA of the next higher level serves as *witness* in elections **-or- delegates, in writing** (to the delegate and the concerned minister), a competent, permanently professed OFS member, in good standing, as *witness*.

A) The *required quorum* for elections is an absolute majority (one more than half) of permanently professed members of the fraternity who are present and able to vote. (Quorum - cf. OFS Constitutions article 77.4).

B) Active excused members who are unable to attend need not be counted in tallying the total number required for a quorum.

C) Permanently professed members of the fraternity who are in good standing and are physically present have the right to vote.

D) *Absentee ballots are NOT allowed.*

E) A spiritual assistant who is a member of the council holding elections, may NOT be elected to any other office on the council of the fraternity they assist nor do they vote in the elections (USA National Statutes - Article 18.3).

2. The *spiritual assistant of the immediately higher level or his delegate* is to be present as a *witness of the communion with the 1st Order and the TOR*. (Article 76.2 of the OFS General Constitutions). The ordinary *witness* of a local council election is the regional spiritual assistant. This duty can be delegated to another competent member of the Franciscan family. **Delegation is given in writing.** A copy is sent to the delegated person and to the minister of the fraternity holding elections.

3. A *witness* should read articles 79 to 82 in the OFS General Constitutions. Article 82 points out offices that are incompatible: *a. the office of minister at two different levels; b. the offices of minister, vice-minister, secretary and treasurer at the same level.* The *witness* opens the elections with prayer. The OFS Ritual may be used or the *witness* can develop a prayer form. The *witness* reminds the membership to vote for competent people for each office. Elections are not a popularity contest but a serious discernment of people competent for the office in which they seek to serve.

The *witness* works with the two tellers to make certain the ballot count is correct. The *witness* assists in correcting inconsistencies in the balloting. The ballots are counted three times by the two tellers:

- a) *Before passing out the ballots* - count out the total number of ballots needed for those who are present and free to vote. Then verify the accurate number for an absolute majority. After this count the ballots are distributed;
- b) *After collecting the ballots* they are counted to verify that an accurate number have voted;
- c) *On the third count the two tellers alternate in reading the names of those receiving votes.* The number of votes should agree with the number of ballots distributed. The *secretary* writes the nominee's name and vote tally where it can be seen by all.

4. The election results for each office is proclaimed to the fraternity by the election's *secretary*. (cf. Page 42 - Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order). The *presider* then asks the nominee if he/she accepts the election. If so, that particular election is finished. If no election is achieved, the same process of balloting continues two or three times. On a third ballot only the two top vote-getters are on the ballot. If there is a tie after the third ballot, the person oldest by profession is elected. If still tied, the oldest by age. For the *election of the councilors*, please read: *General Constitutions - Article 78.3* on next page.

When the elections are finished the *witness* signs the appropriate documents. He/she verifies the legality of the elections. Copies are sent to the appropriate persons (Regional secretary and regional SA as well the local fraternity SA and the PSA of the province to which the fraternity is bonded.) The newly elected individuals now form the fraternity council. *Former council members hand over all pertinent material to their successors.*

+ Information concerning the election of the **Minister and Vice-minister**:

- \* The minister and vice-minister may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years. For a third & final successive election, a majority of two-thirds of the votes must be obtained on the first ballot. The out-going minister cannot be elected vice-minister. (cf. OFS General Constitutions - Article 78.1, .2.)

+ Information concerning the election of **the rest of the council**:

- \* *For the election of the councilors, after a first ballot without an absolute majority, a relative majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret, is sufficient, unless the particular statutes require a greater majority.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 78.3

- \* Councilors may be elected for consecutive terms of three years. For a third consecutive term a two-thirds majority on the first ballot is necessary. **Councilors are elected individually and not as a group!**
- \* Persons (nominees) not elected to any of the first elected offices may be nominated for other offices for which they are competent. The outgoing minister cannot be on the ballot for vice-minister.

+ The installation of the newly elected officers takes place after the elections are concluded. The installation rite can be found in the Ritual on pages 41-43. OFS members may be appointed by the previous council to prepare the rite of installation. Allow for time after the elections to prepare the installation rite. At the installation rite the former councilors, who have not been re-elected, hand over all the materials of their office to the newly elected councilors. Former councilors may not retain any official material.

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*Their service,  
which lasts for a definite period,  
is marked by a ready and willing spirit  
and is a duty of responsibility  
to each member and to the community.*

OFS Rule - #21



***St. Francis in the Stream of Life***  
Anneta Duveen OFS



## JOB DESCRIPTION EXECUTIVE SECRETARY FOR CNSA

Job descriptions for CNSA secretary and treasurer. Texts originally approved by CNSA at their meeting in Phoenix, AZ - January 16, 2003; revised in Durham, NC on September 18, 2007; revised at the CNSA meeting in Jacksonville, FL on February 1, 2012.

1. The executive secretary (hereafter = ES) collaborates with the friar CNSA secretary in fulfilling this job description. The executive secretary serves for a term of two years. The term can be renewed by mutual agreement between the ES and CNSA. The authority for decisions of CNSA belongs to the appointed members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants.
2. The ES keeps notes of the CNSA meetings and sends copies to each CNSA member. The ES communicates with the friar secretary of CNSA to check the accuracy of the notes before sending them.
3. The ES, *in collaboration with CNSA*, prepares the annual report of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistant's ministry. The executive secretary of CNSA gives a copy of the report to the members of CNSA and sends a copy to: A) the NEC; B) the General Spiritual Assistants in Rome; C) any others as directed by CNSA (E.g. PSA, RSA). Each CNSA member can personalize this report and send it to their major superiors.
4. ES expenses for attending the three annual meetings of CNSA is borne by the CNSA treasury as are other costs connected with the job. The secretary seeks these funds from the CNSA treasurer. When in doubt about expenses, the CNSA deals with the issue collaboratively or through its president.
5. The ES prepares the agenda and schedule for CNSA meetings in collaboration with the president of CNSA. The ES (with the approval of CNSA) seeks places in which to meet and deals with logistical arrangements i.e: A) Transportation from airport to sites, B) Materials needed at the meetings. C) Contacts local fraternities who may wish to meet with the CNSA or provide a social evening. D) Requests the regional minister(s) to invite SA's to meetings called for by CNSA.
6. For longer PSA & RSA meetings, the ES handles the logistics for the gathering (cf. #5) The ES contacts local fraternities who may provide an opportunity to meet for dialogue with the CNSA.
7. The ES deals with the correspondence of CNSA, consulting with CNSA president as needed.
  - a. Requests for regional visitations and elections
  - b. Forwards incoming mail to proper CNSA member
  - c. Accepts and/or forwards correspondence from Provincial and Regional Spiritual Assistants to CNSA members as is appropriate.
  - d. Responds to correspondence as required.
8. The ES is involved in archival storage and record-keeping of appropriate material.
9. The ES keeps a record of the establishment of fraternities and the documents associated with the establishment of a fraternity. This may be achieved through appropriate technological means.



*Basilica of St. Francis  
in Assisi*



## **JOB DESCRIPTION TREASURER FOR CNSA**

1. The treasurer of CNSA is appointed by CNSA for a two year term and may be re-appointed after dialogue between the treasurer and CNSA.
2. The CNSA treasurer keeps an accurate record of income and expenses for CNSA. He/she writes the checks for CNSA expenses. This includes payment for room and board for CNSA members at our meetings which are held three times a year. The treasurer pays other expenses as directed by CNSA.
3. Room and board as well as travel expenses for CNSA's executive secretary and treasurer are paid from CNSA funds when they attend CNSA meetings.
4. The office expenses of the CNSA executive secretary are paid from CNSA funds. They include: copying, paper, mailing/postage, phone calls and other legitimate office expenses. The executive secretary submits bills for payment or for re-imbursement to the CNSA treasurer.
5. All and only expenses approved by CNSA are paid by the CNSA treasurer. All requests for funds shall be addressed to the treasurer by the CNSA executive/friar secretary or president-in-turn. *Expenses listed in #2, 3 and 4 are considered ordinary expenses and are approved by CNSA.*
6. The CNSA treasurer shall submit an annual financial report to CNSA at the meeting closest to the end of the fiscal year (December 31). The treasurer also prepares the CNSA budget for the upcoming year. This is shared for approval by CNSA. A competent outside person or firm shall audit the CNSA financial records once every three years, unless CNSA directs otherwise.
7. The names of all four members of CNSA shall be on the bank card for signing checks. The treasurer and CNSA secretary shall have a CNSA check book. This permits payments that require immediate attention. In such cases it is reported to the CNSA at the meeting closest to the date of payment or CNSA is informed through technical means.
8. Financial problems are brought to the attention of CNSA as soon as they occur.
9. The name and address of the CNSA treasurer shall be on the information given to the bank as well as on CNSA checks. The name of the bank and our account information is shared with the members of CNSA.





## THE SANTA CLARA STATEMENT 1972

+ Goals Committee - Lay Franciscan Congress - Santa Clara, CA - August 13-19, 1972

**COMMENT:** Though this statement was made before the OFS Rule of 1978 was published, it carries the spirit of that 1978 Rule in its words. The Goals Committee of the Santa Clara Congress in 1972 offer a fine vision of the OSF way of life. This work of the Holy Spirit gives us fine insights for today.

*Come alive in the Spirit!* was the theme and the challenge of the Lay Franciscan Congress held at Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, August 13-19, 1972. Almost 500 Franciscans, mostly lay men and women, met to pray and study ways of living the Gospel in the present time of history.

The Spirit came upon the early Franciscan movement, enriched it with new life and gave it power to renew the Church in St. Francis' time. Those who took part in this congress at Santa Clara came together with the belief (faith) that the Church today is experiencing a new movement of the Holy Spirit. They searched to find where the Spirit wishes to lead the Franciscan family today.

After listening to experts in various fields, the participants formed small groups on each day of the congress to reflect on the lectures and to form goals for the continued renewal of the Franciscan lay movement. At the end of each day the suggestions of all the groups were gathered and crystalized. The following Statement of Goals shares these insights. It offers insights that are worth your time and meditation. The values need to *take flesh* in our lives: in cathedrals and boardrooms; in big-box stores and Mom and Pop stores; in families and working groups; at swimming pools and suppers; in college reunions and in unexpected meetings with friends. In short - everywhere we happen to be!

### WE ACKNOWLEDGE WHERE WE ARE

*There is disunity and turmoil in our society. As Franciscans we have an answer to this condition in the very Faith we profess. But we have failed to translate this Faith from a mere profession to a way of life.*

+ *We have not been honest with ourselves in living our Faith.*

a. *The fear of being different;*

b. *The inconvenience which Faith-action causes;*

c. *The fear of change;*

d. *The fear of insecurity which change brings.*

*All these have prevented us from having the courage of our convictions.*

+ *Our lives have not been a witness to our Faith which holds the answer to our social problems. We have not been living the Gospel fully.*

### OUR BASIC THRUST

*To begin, with, therefore:*

+ *We shall not retain the old for the sake of the old, nor embrace change for the sake of change. Rather, we shall open our lives to the encounter with Christ and its insecurity as did the rich young Francis when he embraced the leper.*

+ *We shall be positive about the solution of social problems, not negative nor condemnatory.*

+ *We shall express our opinions to our neighbors and to those with whom we come into contact, in humility and charity, in order to help mold their thinking.*

+ *We shall select one particular issue, using our own personal initiative and without disregarding other issues, and we shall do what we are able in our circumstances to help solve that particular problem.*

## THE ROOTS OF OUR RESPONSE

*In the tradition of St Francis, our response to the world and the time in which we live:*

- + *Acknowledging that the Holy Spirit is the Source of all our creativity, both personal and communal.*
- + *It gives joyful glory and praise to God through a continuous and growing prayer life;*
- + *It constantly assumes a posture of metanoia, i.e. personal repentance which corrects our direction;*
- + *It fosters Christ-centered, personal, frequent communal experiences to rediscover and translate the Gospel into everyday living;*
- + *It seeks to be sensitive to the needs of others, both within and without the Franciscan community.*

*It is our fraternal goal to cooperate with the Spirit in coming to a closer relationship with God through prayer, and with people through presence. Our prayer and presence will be more open, joyful, personal, sensitive, frequent, Gospel-centered and repentant.*

## STEWARDSHIP, SERVANTHOOD

*Our life and possessions are not our own, but God's gift. Ours is a stewardship, not an ownership. Hence:*

- + *We must be ready to give of ourselves in truly personal service to our brothers and sisters - not as lords, but as servants;*
- + *We are united in our determination to resist the exploitations and greed of consumerism, while some of us differ as to whether this servanthood is incompatible with the standards and consequences of Capitalism itself;*
- + *We must be prophetic witnesses against the materialism of our society and light the lamp of Evangelical Poverty in order to project the spirit of Christian servanthood;*
- + *Finally, we affirm the need of intimate prayer based on Scripture and of intimate closeness to Christ if, instead of becoming slaves to the economic system, we are to participate in the servanthood of God and his Christ.*

## PEACE - RECONCILIATION

*We lay Franciscan brothers and sisters acknowledge that peace, reconciliation, poverty, obedience to the Church and service to others (especially to the poor and oppressed) are essential values of the Franciscan family. As we live the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they are essential both personally and corporately. Therefore:*

- + *We commit ourselves to that continuing change of heart which will allow us to hear the cry of the poor, the oppressed, and the afflicted;*
- + *We acknowledge our need to probe the causes of the social injustices of our day. We have a need to bring genuine awareness to the actual situation of our oppressed brothers and sisters. We need to come to know our relationship to these causes;*
- + *We propose to act in order to find creative solutions on behalf of our deprived and oppressed brothers and sisters; for example, by our participation in government by voting; by writing to our legislators and the editors of papers; by participating in meetings and*

*rallies expressing public opinion, by supporting honest and capable candidates in various practical ways.*

*We commit ourselves to identify the causes of disunity and disorder so we can help reverse the process by which people are divided. We commit ourselves to reverse the process by which barriers have been created among people. We are committed to reverse the process by which we have maintained a class system detrimental not only to our social life but to our spiritual life as well.*

*We are committed to the liberation of every person, for we know that if we are not for and with the oppressed and afflicted, we are their oppressors.*

*We acknowledge responsibility:*

- a. For concern about the issues of world justice and peace;*
- b. For educating ourselves to the sins of exploitation and violence;*
- c. For awakening our government and our society to injustice and ever perpetrated:*
  - + in the administration of justice for the poor;*
  - + in abortion and abuse of the right to life;*
  - + in unjust and discriminatory welfare and tax laws;*
  - + in denial of adequate housing;*
  - + in unjust treatment of prisoners;*
  - + in the injustice of war.*

*As Franciscans we need to embrace with our hearts - non-violence, reconciliation, and peace.*

### **THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**

*We call the Franciscan family to be a new creation in the Church and the world, as community and servant.*

*We rejoice that young people find the Franciscan way attractive. Together with them we are committed to creating a climate for the pursuit of a Franciscan understanding of our times.*

*To this end, educational programs will be developed with special emphasis on the charism of Francis, Sacred Scriptures, and the social issues of today.*

*For Lay Franciscans to be formed in the likeness of Jesus Christ in the fraternity, more frequent meetings are necessary, along with the kind of guidance which demands a genuine response to the Franciscan way;*

*In response of love for the Church, we will join in parish activities that will foster the growth of the Church as a community, involving ourselves in a special way in the liturgical renewal;*

*In response to the needs of the elderly members of our fraternities, we will assure ourselves that the elderly members are adequately housed, even to the extent of our sponsoring sheltered care or nursing homes;*

*We acknowledge the poverty of our relationship with the First and Second Orders of St. Francis and the TOR, with religious of the Third Order, and with other lay fraternities.*

- + We will take steps to build communities among the whole Franciscan Family, sharing with each other in a variety of ways.*
- + Together with them we will organize for the impact which is possible for Franciscans as a broad movement to make on our world today.*
- + In order to build community, we will encourage the attempt of members of some fraternities to achieve communal living wherever there is a serious desire to live this style of life.*



*We acknowledge that the goals of the Franciscan movement allow for great diversity in prayer forms and styles, and that the brothers and sisters should accept each other in this regard as they are called to pray to the Lord.*

*Thus, the **goals** of the Catholic charismatic movement, namely, repentance, faith, commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and openness to the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the glory of the Father, are goals essential to the life of the Church and are in harmony with the personal and communal vocation of Franciscans.*

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*This is what the parable means.  
The seed is the word of God.*

*The seed along the footpath  
stands for those who hear it,  
and the devil comes and carries off  
the word from their hearts for fear  
they should believe and be saved.*

*The seed sown on rock  
stands for those who receive the word  
with joy when they hear it,  
but have no root;  
they are believers for a while,  
but in the time of testing they give up.*

*That which fell among thistles  
represents those who hear,  
but their growth is choked  
by cares and wealth and the pleasures of life,  
and they bring nothing to maturity.*

*But the seed in good soil represents those  
who bring a good and honest heart  
to the hearing of the word,  
hold it fast, and  
by their perseverance yield a harvest.*

Luke 8: 11-15 (REB)



## CONCLUSIONS OF THE OFS GENERAL CHAPTER 2002

**COMMENT:** At the conclusion of a broad debate conducted in the course of a week of intense work, the 2002 General Chapter indicated a series of themes and areas of priority which the Presidency, in its task of guiding and animating the Order in the whole world, would have to concentrate its commitment at least until 2008., and perhaps, beyond 2008. **NB:** These themes and priorities have long range effects. The OFS is encouraged to give them serious attention and put them into action at each level of the OFS.

### 1. FORMATION.

- + This received the most attention. We invite a broader exchange of formation materials among the fraternities of the world.
- + We support projects to study and initiate adequate formation programs throughout the world. Eastern Europe has such projects. Africa, for example, is in need of such projects.
- + National fraternities should support and assist the Secular Franciscans who, for serious and justified reasons, are isolated from their local fraternities.
- + In the light of positive changes in the General Constitutions concerning spiritual assistance, **the formation of spiritual assistants, both religious and lay, will have to be strongly supported and favored**, by offering a particular help to the First Order and Third Order Regular. (Remember that this is being said in 2002).

### 2. PRESENCE IN THE WORLD.

The chapter is concerned that many fraternities confine themselves to their own boundaries rather than opening themselves to the larger Franciscan world.

- + We call on all Secular Franciscans to involve themselves in the areas of justice, peace and safeguarding creation (JPIC);
- + Fraternities are called to reflect on the *Spirit of Assisi* so that the spirit of Assisi might become incarnated throughout our Franciscan world;
- + The OFS is committed to involvement in public life and in the world of labor. This must be rooted in fraternity life in whatever way it is possible. We are expected to be a concrete and authentic leaven in society wherever we go;
- + A commitment in favor of the family, its defense, the recognition of its importance in the life of every society, nation and culture. The family has an irreplaceable value. It is the stronghold of every fraternity in the world.

### 3. FRANCISCAN YOUTH

The reality of Franciscan Youth requires great attention. There may be problems in its relationship to the OFS, YuFra and spiritual assistance. There is a lack of uniformity in guidelines for youth. Dealing with young people is a vital ingredient of our Franciscan life. We neglect it to our peril. Every national fraternity is called upon to address the issue of Franciscan Youth. (Spoken in 2002! - can we catch up?)

- + We seek concrete suggestions regarding the establishment of Franciscan youth where no organization exists;
- + Offer suggestions to assist National Fraternities that do not have a Franciscan youth organization.
- + The former documents on YuFra (1995) need updating and we encourage the preparation of a formation manual dealing with the formation of Franciscan Youth as well as those who may wish to enter the OFS;

- + There is a need to intensify, improve and revitalize the relationship between the OFS and YuFra;
- + The relationship between YuFra, the OFS and spiritual assistance needs a healthy enrichment so that it may blossom and support the growth of Franciscan Youth groups;
- + There is a need to develop specific age criteria for YuFra members.

#### 4. FINANCES

The *fair share* that supports fraternities on all levels is one of the signs of commitment to the OFS. It shows clearly the vital communion among all the Secular Franciscans and their concern for the Order. Economic support is both needed and, rightfully, expected from all fraternites.

- + We look for the economic support that allows the Councils at all levels to accomplish their essential work.
- + We need to consider new financial instruments and ways to support the International fraternity.
- + New criteria need to be developed for the annual contribution of each country in favor of the International Fraternity.
- + Funds need to be collected for the purchase of a headquarters building for the International Fraternity. A specific means for this funding needs to be developed.

#### 5. SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

*This issue is of vital importance. A life-giving union within the Franciscan Family requires the presence of suitable and well-prepared spiritual assistants. **Programs to prepare people for this role are an important feature** of our present situation regarding spiritual assistance to the OFS.*

- + The OFS offers its help in the formation of spiritual assistants, especially for lay SA's;
- + Special help is needed for individuals who offer spiritual assistance to YuFra groups. A specific program needs to be developed to assist anyone who serves YuFra.

#### 6. COMMUNION IN THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

Franciscans, both lay and religious, belong to one family. We need to work hard to make that family communion a reality throughout the world.

- + We seek an intensive dialogue among the various branches of the Franciscan family.
- + We propose developing some common initiatives to achieve this *life-giving union*.
- + We urge development of a sense of equality among all members of the Franciscan Family.





**LETTER OF THE  
CONFERENCE OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**  
2005

**COMMENT:** This letter was written on Pentecost, 2005, by the Ministers General of the 1st Order/TOR;

The OFS Minister General; The Praeses of CFI-TOR;

Jose Rodriguez OFM - Joachim Giermack OFM Conv - John Corriveau OFM Cap - Ilija Zikovic TOR;

Encarnacion del Pozo OFS - Sr. Carola Thormann CFI-TOR

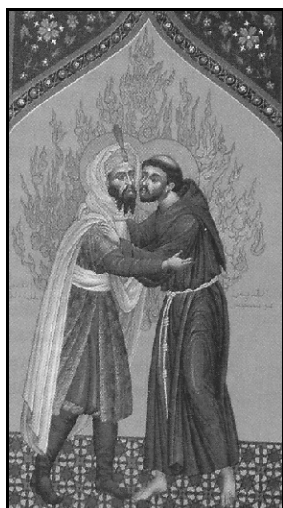
On the occasion of Pentecost - 2005

**"Instruments of Peace"**

4. *A careful reading of our sources not only presents us the early movement of the "Minors" as a true and proper message of peace and reconciliation, but it allows us to identify some essential attitudes in order to carry out a process of peace and reconciliation even today in a situation made inflexible through discord and struggle by:*

*(cf. Little Flowers of St. Francis - 21)*

- + *maintaining God as the centre of activity;*
- + *proceeding always with strength and wisdom in communion;*
- + *identifying the true causes of violence and calling them by their real name;*
- + *promoting conversion and reconciliation of all parties;*
- + *seeking to heal and restore relationships rather than resolving disputes;*
- + *re-establishing justice as the basis of real peace;*
- + *recognizing that all social relationships are asymmetrical and that every situation of conflict implies imbalance and an evil use of power;*
- + *remaining disarmed (cf. Memoriali Propositi 16);*
- + *rejecting the demonizing of one of the parties and recognizing all as brothers and sisters;*
- + *facing up to conflict actively, being exposed personally to danger and allowing oneself to become involved.*



*These attitudes present a real and proper path for promoting peace to us and require acting without arrogance or force. Such behavior is only possible, however, on the basis of unconditional confidence in God. Only by maintaining His Spirit and His Authority at the centre of one's activity can the attempt at reconciliation and pacification have any hope of success. Accepting such a service in favour of peace is not without its dangers or difficulties. The Franciscan, therefore, does not walk alone, but in vital and mutual communion with the worldwide fraternity and the Church, a communion which gives support and encouragement. Proceeding in unity, the Brothers and Sisters can and must recognize, with prophetic courage, the true causes of every form of violence and call them by name. The violence cannot be hidden or minimised. Only by knowing how to recognize and by accepting to heal the evil, can a process which will lead to conversion and reconciliation of all the parties involved be initiated and, in the end, it must be sought to re-establish justice as the basis for constructing true peace, because only in this way can the mediations used to achieve reconciliation have a lasting future.*

**Instruments of Peace** - Conference of the Franciscan Family - #4 - Pages 6-7



**The New Evangelization** (Term originally used by John Paul II)

- \* *The "new evangelization" is the courage to forge new paths in responding to the changing circumstances and conditions facing the Church in her call to proclaim and live the Gospel today.*
- \* *The "new evangelization" is primarily a spiritual activity capable of recapturing in our times the courage and forcefulness of the first Christians and the first missionaries.*
- \* *A "new evangelization" also means to have the boldness to raise the question of God in the context of these problems, thereby fulfilling the specific character of the Church's mission and showing how the Christian perspective enlightens, in an unprecedented way, the great problems of history.*
- \* *The "new evangelization" calls us to engage in dialogue with this world, not remaining confined to our communities and our institutions, but accepting the challenge to take part in these realities so as to speak and bear witness in these sectors, from the inside. This is the form of Christian "martyria" in today's world, engaging in dialogue even with the recent forms of militant atheism or extreme secularism, whose purpose is to eliminate the subject of God from human life.*
- \* *A "new evangelization" means that the Church must convincingly sustain her efforts at uniting all Christians in a common witness to the world of the prophetic and transforming power of the gospel message. Justice, peace, living with others and the stewardship of creation have characterized ecumenism over the decades.*
- \* *The "new evangelization" is an invitation to Christian communities to place greater trust in the Spirit who guides them in the course of history. In this way, they can overcome the temptation of fear.*
- \* *"New Evangelization" means, then, to work in our local Churches to devise a plan for evaluating the previously mentioned phenomena in such a manner as to transmit the Gospel of hope in a practical way.*
- \* *"New Evangelization" means personal renewal of Paul's burning sentiment proclaiming: "If I preach the Gospel, this is no reason for me to boast, for an obligation has been imposed on me and woe to me if I do not preach it!" (1 Corinthians 9: 16 - NEB)*

*"Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him." It is not, therefore, a matter of inventing "a new program." The program already exists: it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication.*

Quotations from "Evangelized to Evangelize" - International OFS Chapter, Brazil - 2011 - Page 1-2

*"Duc in altum!" An enthusiastic work of pastoral remodeling is waiting for us. It is a work where we are all involved. The Holy Spirit in person - who made Francis' heart to be illuminated by His flame, who also identified him with the mystery of Jesus, poor and crucified, in fraternal communion with all creatures, and who entrusted him the greatest mission of repairing the Church - has called the Secular Franciscan Order and the Franciscan Youth. The Spirit has taken us to his own at the moment of our OFS Profession or our commitment to Franciscan Youth, and has sent us to the entire world in the name of the Church. "I have done my part, let Christ show you yours!" (Legenda Major - 14,3)*

Ibid - "Conclusion" - Page 6

**Some Thoughts on Evangelization** (Paul VI)

*41. Without repeating everything that we have already mentioned, it is appropriate first of all to emphasize the following point: for the Church, the first means of evangelization is the witness of an*

*authentically Christian life, given over to God in a communion that nothing should destroy and at the same time given to one's neighbor with limitless zeal. As we said recently to a group of lay people, "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses." St. Peter expressed this well when he held up the example of a reverent and chaste life that wins over even without a word those who refuse to obey the word (1 Peter 3:1). It is therefore primarily by her conduct and by her life that the Church will evangelize the world, by her living witness of fidelity to the Lord Jesus - the witness of poverty and detachment, of freedom in the face of the powers of this world, in short, the witness of sanctity.*

*On Evangelization in the Modern World - Evangelii Nuntiandi - Paul VI - Paragraph 41*



### **Franciscans and Evangelization**

*The task of evangelization proves to be simpler when those who possess authority and power within the Church exhibit a trust and confidence in the working of the Holy Spirit among all of the People of God. For obedience to ecclesial structures and programs must always be related to the impulses of the Spirit of God, who works not only in structures but also and more significantly in people. Blind subservience must not have a place in a Church governed by the Holy Spirit, especially among those who are called to the process of rebuilding God's house. On the other hand, the Franciscan-inspired person does not raise his or her opinions, insights, or experiences to newly and individually infallible statements. The Franciscan impulse is not to make statements but to live a life that imitates Francis' call to be peacemakers among the people. Francis was a man of profound courtesy, a virtue desperately needed by anyone who wishes to follow his way.*

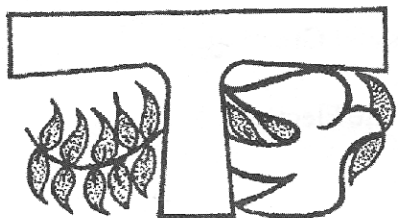
*The Franciscan mission within the Church does not consist in defending the faith against outside forces; there are other groups with that charism within the Church. The Franciscan challenge is to accept Francis' call to heal and to mend and to call according to the Gospel. ...*

*Build With Living Stones - Franciscan Institute - St. Bonaventure University - Unit 14 - Pages 5 & 7*



*The Spirit is also the energy which transforms the heart of the ecclesial community, so that it becomes a witness before the world to the love of the Father, who wishes to make humanity a single family in his Son.*

*God is Love - Benedict XVI - Paragraph 19*





## THOUGHTS FROM VATICAN II

**COMMENT:** We are blessed with the guidance of the documents of Vatican II. We'll share some of the ideas in two Vatican II documents: *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - Lumen Gentium* (Promulgated by Pope Paul VI on November 21, 1964). *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World - Gaudium et Spes* (Promulgated by Pope Paul VI - December 7, 1965). It is impressive to recognize how well the Holy Spirit prompted the authors of these documents in preparing us for the decades that would follow.



Franciscans will find guidance in them for today! There is much to embrace in these documents as well as the other documents of Vatican II. Spiritual assistants are encouraged to study the documents and encourage others to do the same. The few quotations on these pages offer a sample of the wisdom in *Gaudium et Spes*. What is true of *Gaudium et Spes* also applies to the other documents of Vatican II.

**Spiritual assistants** study these documents for personal learning and to share insights with secular Franciscans. SA's are in a good position to encourage secular Franciscans to become familiar with these texts. The words of *Gaudium et Spes* on these first pages (Pages 69 - 70) are from the official translation. The texts that follow (Pages 71 - 72) are the same texts as translated in the book: *Vatican II in Plain English* by Bill Huebsch (Vol 2 - The Constitutions). Huebsch's 3 volumes of Vatican II documents can help people read the documents and understand them. I used both translations on these pages to offer you a glimpse of both. You can choose whichever translation you find most helpful and readable in perusing the documents of Vatican II.

**Gaudium et Spes:** (Paragraphs 3 and 4 - Official translation)

*3. Therefore, this sacred synod, proclaiming the noble destiny of man and championing the godlike seed which has been sown in him, offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of their's. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not to be served.*

*4. ... Today, the human race is involved in a new stage of history. Profound and rapid changes are spreading by degrees around the whole world. Triggered by the intelligence and creative energies of man, these changes recoil upon him, upon his decisions and desires, both individual and collective, and upon his manner of thinking and acting with respect to things and to people. Hence we can already speak of a true cultural and social transformation, one which has repercussions on man's religious life as well.*

*... Never has the human race enjoyed such an abundance of wealth, resources and economic power, and yet a huge proportion of the world's citizens are still tormented by hunger and poverty, while countless numbers suffer from total illiteracy. Never before has man had so keen an understanding of freedom, yet at the same time, new forms of social and psychological slavery make their appearance. Although the world of today has a very vivid awareness of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which could reduce everything to ashes. True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems. Finally, man painstakingly searches for a better world, without a corresponding spiritual advancement.*

**COMMENT:** How do Franciscans make a difference among people who may be prompted by greed, profit, fear, anxiety, or competition? The Holy Spirit calls us to bring gospel hope to people. People may be more concerned with paychecks than with loving the neighbor. People can be more concerned with personal needs than with a concern for people around the globe. Our call is to find what will move Franciscans to invest energy in favor of the needs of people on planet earth! But, as someone put it:

***If not us, who?*** The task is daunting, but our Franciscan vocation clearly requires that we become: instruments of peace; of hope and faith; of compassion and forgiveness; of seeking unity rather than separation. Our world is often torn apart by the very things that were supposed to bring happiness. Ads tell us what we can purchase to achieve satisfaction only to learn that some of our new tools have a short life-span. They are replaced by newer, faster, smaller, sometimes more complicated or more short-lived than before. Yet sales and Black Fridays draw us to buy more "things." We search for the latest, the newest, the technologically better, the cheaper "things." But our lives seem much the same even when we have more "things" - which we may desire but not really need. Franciscans try to face these issues with fresh insights and new ways to discover the source of joy.



**Gaudium et Spes** (Paragraphs 5, 6, 8 - official translation)

*5. This scientific spirit has a new kind of impact on the cultural sphere and on modes of thought. Technology is now transforming the face of the earth, and is already trying to master outer space. To a certain extent, the human intellect is also broadening its dominion over time; over the past by means of historical knowledge; over the future, by the art of projecting and by planning.*

*... At the same time, the human race is giving steadily increasing thought to forecasting and regulating its own population growth. History itself speeds along on so rapid a course that an individual person can scarcely keep abreast of it. The destiny of the human community has become all of a piece, where once the various groups of men had a kind of private history of their own.*

*Thus the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as numerous as can be, calling for efforts of analysis and synthesis.*

*6. By this very circumstance, the traditional local communities such as families, clans, tribes, villages, various groups and associations stemming from social contact, experience more thorough changes every day.*

*8. ... Within the individual person there develops rather frequently an imbalance between an intellect which is modern in practical matters and a theoretical system of thought which can neither master the sum total of its ideas, nor arrange them adequately into a synthesis. Likewise an imbalance arises between a concern for practicality and efficiency, and the demands of moral conscience; also very often between the conditions of collective existence and the requisites of personal thought and even of contemplation. At length there develops an imbalance between specialized human activity and a comprehensive view of reality.*

*As for the family, discord results from population, economic and social pressures, or from difficulties which arise between succeeding generations, or from new social relationships between men and women.*

**COMMENT:** It is impressive that these ideas were being spoken to the Church in the 1960's - about a half century ago. We Franciscans live in the middle of this social milieu. We are called to bring a sense of security and hope to people whose fears are multiple and whose security apparently cannot be bought with fences or walls, or security systems, or soldiers or armies, or tools of destruction. We may fear these things knowing that **the evil** they can do to others can also be done to us. We fear that it will be difficult to avoid such consequences. On the other hand, **the good** things we do to others can also be done to us. *So what goal fits our Franciscan charism?* How can we sow a gospel spirit to people who might, (I say "might,"), also do good to us. We can embrace the ways of peace and unity and do it regularly! If ALL of US do it, and radical conversion happens in our lives, we might be able to bring a measure of security to this confusing world - based on God's faithful love.

It will require more than words and books and TV shows and pictures on Ipods. It will also require a life that is lived according to faith and our calling as Franciscans. We choose the daily path of being



faithful to our Franciscan vocation. Perhaps even a small taste of conversion will make us hungry for more. YOU make that decision! Give it a try! As a spiritual assistant who embraces Vatican II insights, you may suggest to others the wisdom of the documents. The texts which follow are the same texts but translated by Bill Huebsch: *Vatican II in Plain English* (3 volumes) - Vol 2 - *The Constitutions* - (Ave Maria Press). The accuracy and read-ability of the translation make them a good text for study.



**Gaudium et Spes** (Paragraph 3 and 4 - Huebsch's translation):

*3. We now offer to the world the honest assistance of the Church in fostering human harmony which is our destiny. In this we follow our teacher, Christ, who came to give witness to truth and to serve and not to be served.*

*4. One of those signs is the profound and rapid change that is everywhere. Riding on the intelligence of the human race, the creative energies of people have produced unprecedented social transformation. As we might expect, this tranformation has also brought serious difficulties.*

*... Never has the human race enjoyed more wealth, yet a huge number of people are tormented by poverty, illiteracy, and want. Never has there been such human freedom in the world, yet new forms of social and psychological slavery also make their appearance alongside it. Never has the world been so close to the brink of unity and interdependence, yet new and opposing camps threaten this possibility. There is even the frightening propect of a war of total destruction! Never before has the drive for a better world been more on the minds of men and women, yet there is not a corresponding spiritual advancement to give it meaning and guidance. As a result, many people are burdened with uneasiness even as they enjoy the benefits of modern life. We humans must respond to all of this; indeed, we cannot escape doing so.*

**COMMENT:** Notice how we are called to create not just an abundance of "things" to meet various needs, but we are also called to produce an abundance of "meaning" in using these "things." We have plenty of "things" but not always a spiritual meaning to guide their use. The OFS Rule (1978) offers guidance to Franciscans in dealing with the meaning of "things" in their lives.

**Gaudium et Spes** (Paragraphs 5, 6, 8 - Huebsch's translation))

*5. Today's spiritual hungers result, in part, from a much more scientific approach to understanding the world. Technology is transforming the world, not to mention outer space! And to a certain extent, the human intellect is even beginning to control time: the past by means of historical knowledge, the future by means of projecting and planning.*

*... At the same time, the human race is now considering the regulation of its own population growth. History speeds along on so rapid a course that one can scarcely keep abreast of it, and we humans have now passed from a rather static understanding of reality to one much more dynamic and evolutionary.*

*6. By this very fact, local groups, such as families, clans, or villages, are rapidly being transformed. Ideas and social conditions that have lasted for centuries are quickly being replaced in our time by new concepts of social organization.*

*8. ... One's intellect, for example, may be thoroughly modern, while one's theory of meaning is more traditional, and no joining of the two seems possible. Or one's concern for practicality and efficiency is in tension with one's moral conscience. Or the demands of collective existence conflict with one's need for personal thought and even contemplation. Furthermore, the family is in tension with pressures from many sides: population control, economic realities, or social demands. Likewise, tensions emerge among nations when some are so wealthy and others so poor. All of this leads to mistrust, division, and hardship, and humans are at once the cause and the victims of it all.*

Gaudium et Spes - Vatican II - Paragraphs 5, 6, 8

**COMMENT:** The perception of reality by the members of Vatican II (1960's) is amazing in their perception of the reality of our world in the 21st century! These short segments from one document reveal insights that can guide us in understanding our world and its people. Such understanding has a direct impact on the way we choose to live our Franciscan lives. Spiritual assistants will find material in Vatican II texts that can be part of both initial and ongoing formation. It is the Ecumenical Council closest to us in time and worthy for us to take time to peruse rather than resist.

In this context the OFS Rule (1978) shows a profound insight in responding to Vatican II as the Rule of 1978 was being written. We are blessed with a Rule that brings us a special way of loving our God, our neighbor, and ourselves, serving all three with love. Notice how we are called to love the "others."

*Thus, in the "spirit of the Beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power (OFS Rule #11).*

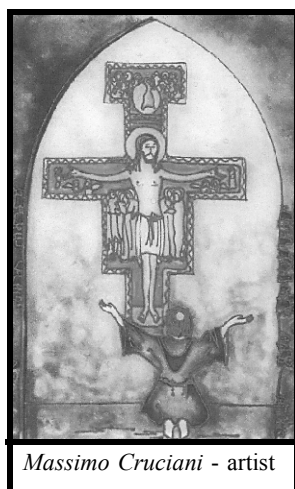
*Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters (OFS Rule #12).*

*A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ (OFS Rule #13).*

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**Blessed John XXIII** was elected Pope on October 28, 1958. In his 41½ years as Pope, and through Vatican II, he brought the Church into conversation with the 20th century and beyond. He became a member of the OFS on March 1, 1896 (by Fr. Luigi Isacchi). His profession of the *Rule of 1883* was on May 23, 1897. He said of his profession: *We like to thank our Lord for this grace which happily coincided with the act whereby we began ecclesiastical life (Tonsure).* He was ordained in 1904 and worked in many ministries, including representing the Holy See in Bulgaria, Turkey, Greece and France. Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (John XXIII) shared these words: *See everything, overlook a great deal, correct a little. Prudent is he who can keep silent that part of the truth which may be untimely, and by not speaking it, does not spoil the truth of what he said.* He died on June 3, 1963, at the age of 82. His cause for canonization is in the hands of the Franciscan postulator General.

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Massimo Cruciani - artist



*Let us refer all good to the Lord,  
God Almighty and Most High,  
acknowledge that every good is His,  
and thank Him,  
from Whom all good comes,  
for everything.  
May He, the Almighty and Most High,  
the only true God,  
have, be given, and receive  
all honor and respect,  
all praise and blessing,  
all thanks and glory,  
to Whom all good belongs,  
He Who alone is good.*



## BEATITUDES AND FRANCISCANS

### Devotions and social action

We challenge spiritual assistants in their call to share Franciscan spirituality with the members of the OFS. Reflecting on the 1978 OFS Rule we find in each article issues that are gospel-oriented. Some are obvious. For others we need to engage in *ongoing formation*. Each article of the Rule invites Franciscans to understand that articles of the Rule are not only gospel-oriented, but also gospel-difficult. Taking the Rule seriously requires prayer, dialogue, and action to discover how to follow the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Franciscans go *from Gospel to life and life to Gospel*. Their baptism calls them *to seek an encounter with the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters*. Article #11 has some serious requirements for Franciscans.

*Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the Gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.*

*Thus, in the spirit of the "beatitudes," and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possessions and power.*

1978 OFS Rule - # 11

As SAs and secular Franciscans meditate on article 11 and reflect on their personal application of the article, they may discover areas of life that need *conversion*. The OFS Rule calls for a number of qualities that should shine through our lives. *Ready and willing, like Jesus and Mary, to choose a poor and humble life, trusting in the Father*. Having made the choice, our task is to figure out what *poor* and *humble* means for OFS members and how we can show our *trust in the Father* - every day!

Article 11 mentions that Christ loved created things, giving sensitive attention to created things without "owning them" just for himself. Quite a task! We possess many "things" in closets and on shelves, in drawers and on coffee tables, and even in rented storage places. To develop a *spirit of detachment* from temporal goods is no easy task. What is meant by "detachment?" How does it look in life? Once I understand the word, what do I do with all my "stuff?" How does my heart change? I recognize a responsibility to be a good *steward* of all my "stuff." What does that mean? I develop ways to deal with "stuff" so it builds community life and not just my own security blanket. It wouldn't be difficult to ignore Article 11 while I search for an easier article to explore. That creates another problem. We professed to live the entire Rule, not just segments. *So now what?*

If one article requires such serious reflection, I understand why *ongoing formation* is so important. It tells me that fraternity life is not just repeated gatherings that start to look the same. We may limit our dialogue to talk about things that make us feel good. Instead, we could add to our gatherings a call to account for our way of living the OFS Rule. A Franciscan life is not just filled with joy and nice things - *May God be praised!* But real joy requires, as part of the call (Article 11), that we are poor and humble, that we recognize that we are *stewards* and not owners. That the things we have are for us but also for *the benefit of God's children* - the common good.

Article 11 dares us to embrace *the spirit of the beatitudes* - whatever that means? What is it that the beatitudes expect us to enfold in our lives? We are called to understand the words of Jesus and what we hope to accomplish through the *spirit of the beatitudes*. Jesus says that people are blessed for things we would often not consider important. Being *blessed* means people are given special favors, are fortunate, are the lucky ones. Notice that the "*blessed ones*" don't seem to be those in authority nor those who have lots of earthly success e.g. the Romans, the Pharisees or Sadducees, or others who wield authority. The beatitudes seem to call people without power to be blessed. Jesus shares a perspective that is not society's perception of successful people. Jesus' idea of faithfulness is spelled out in the beatitudes. To be poor in spirit, to be gentle, to be people whose hearts are pure, etc. This is joined to a willingness to model the qualities of blessedness in daily life.

Being a person who lives in the *spirit of the beatitudes* may not be an easy goal to reach. Such people are not readily praised and respected in our society. Society often considers them to be people from the wrong side of the tracks. They are not held up as models for children nor examples of how to enjoy life. In fact, there is an unspoken rejection, that may not be verbalized, but shows itself in gestures and walking away and silence. People who live the *spirit of the beatitudes* are not always welcomed. Here is Matthew's list of the beatitudes given by Jesus.

*Blessed are the poor in spirit; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Blessed are the sorrowful, they shall find consolation. Blessed are the gentle; they shall have the earth for their possession. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; they shall be satisfied. Blessed are those who show mercy; mercy shall be shown to them. Blessed are those whose hearts are pure; they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; they shall be called God's children. Blessed are those who are persecuted in the cause of right; the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Blessed are you when you suffer insults and persecution and calumnies of every kind for my sake. Exalt and be glad, for you have a rich reward in heaven; in the same way they persecuted the prophets before you.*

Matthew 5: 2 - 12 (REB)

In all honesty, does this description of beatitude-people sound like a description of an all-American person? Will beatitude people wear the right clothes? Live in the right neighborhood? Have the right job? Drive the right car? Win political campaigns? Someone who knows how to use the perks of power? Who knows how to use religion to achieve a place of power? Or what? It seems that counter-cultural is a weak way of describing the beatitude person.

The strength for living the beatitudes comes from God. The Holy Spirit is sent so that the first disciples and those who followed could be faithful in the face of rejection by secular and religious authorities. The example of Peter makes this clear. Before and during the passion he could not understand how suffering and death could possibly be the way to get a new movement started in Israel. He even denied his friendship with Jesus to evade persecution.

After the coming of the Holy Spirit, Peter, the original denier, dared to say to the religious authorities after his arrest in the temple (for speaking about Jesus): *And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said: "Rulers of the people and elders, if it is about help given to a sick man that we are being questioned today, and the means by which he was cured, this is our answer to all of you and to the people of Israel: it was by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, and whom God raised from the dead; through him this man stands before you fit and well. This Jesus is the stone, rejected by you the builders, which has become the cornerstone." ... they were astonished at their boldness* (and after consultation among themselves they returned to Peter and John). *They called them in and ordered them to refrain from all public speaking and teaching in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied: "Is it right in the eyes of God for us to obey you rather than him? Judge for yourselves. We cannot possibly give up speaking about what we have seen and heard."* (Acts 4: 8-14, 18-20 - REB)

To live in the *spirit of the beatitudes* is not done through our own power, but the power of the Trinity who dwell in us. Perhaps that is why the OFS Rule also says: *As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.* (OFS Rule - #8).

A spiritual assistant is called to be a gentle, sharing presence in fraternity life. He/she realizes that achieving the good the OFS Rule invites us to model can only happen with the guidance, power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Neither can we simply invest in adoration and attend Eucharist without also imitating Jesus' self-giving to our neighbor in need. Our way is not an *either/or* approach, but rather a *both/and* approach - both prayer and action!

*Many popular devotions have a public and social character. They are a constant reminder of the social dimension of the Gospel. God has created us as social beings by our very nature. We always live in a relationship of interdependence with others and always have a responsibility to work for the common good of our society.... As John Paul II put it: "it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good." ... because we are all really responsible for all."*

Popular Devotional Practices - Statement of USCCB - Page17 (2003)



### **The Laity**

2. *The Church was founded so that by spreading Christ's kingdom throughout the world to the glory of God the Father, every man and woman may share in the saving work of redemption, and so that through them the entire world may be truly directed towards Christ. Every activity of the mystical body, with this in view, goes by the name of apostolate, which the Church exercises through all its members, though in various ways. In fact, the christian vocation is, of its nature, a vocation to the apostolate as well. In the organism of a living body no member is purely passive; sharing in the life of the body each member also shares in its activity. The same is true of the body of Christ which is the Church, the whole body "when each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth." (Ephesians 4:16). Between the members of this body there exists, further, such a unity and solidarity (cf. Ephesians 4:16) that members who fail to do their best to promote the growth of the body must be considered unhelpful to the Church and to themselves.*

Vatican II - Apostolicam actuositatem - Paragraph 2 - Official translation

3. *Lay people's right and duty to be apostles derives from their union with Christ their head. Inserted as they are in the mystical body of Christ by baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit in confirmation, it is by the Lord himself that they are assigned to the apostolate. If they are consecrated a royal priesthood and a holy nation (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-10), this is so that in all their actions they may offer spiritual sacrifices and bear witness to Christ all the world over. Charity, which is, as it were, the soul of the whole apostolate, is given to them and nourished by the sacraments and especially by the Eucharist.*

Ibid - Paragraph 3 - Official translation

*... Only the light of faith and meditation on the word of God can enable us to find everywhere and always the God "in whom we live and exist." (Acts 17:28); only thus can we seek his will in everything, see Christ in every one, acquaintance or stranger; make sound judgments on the true meaning and in relation to our final end.*

*... lay spirituality will take its particular character from the circumstances of one's state in life - married and family life, celibacy, widowhood - from one's state of health and from one's professional and social activity. Whatever their circumstance, all have received suitable talents and these should be cultivated, as should also the personal gifts they have from the Holy Spirit.*

***Similarly, lay people who have followed their particular vocation and become members of any of the associations or institutions approved by the Church aim sincerely at making their own forms of spirituality proper to these bodies.***

*They should also hold in high esteem professional competence, family and civic sense, and the virtues related to social behavior such as honesty, sense of justice, sincerity, courtesy, moral courage, without them there is no true Christian life.*

Ibid - Paragraph 4 - Official translation

### **Benedict XVI speaks on the role of the laity**

*The synod frequently spoke of the laity and thanks them for their generous activity in spreading the Gospel in the various settings of daily life, at work and in the schools, in the family and in education. This responsibility, rooted in Baptism, needs to develop through an ever more conscious Christian way of life capable of "accounting for the hope" within us (Cf. 1 Peter 3:15). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus points out that "the field of the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom" (Mt 13:38). These words apply especially to the Christian laity, who live out their specific vocation to holiness by a life in the Spirit expressed "in a particular way by their engagement in temporal matters and by their participation in earthly activities. The laity need to be trained to discern God's will through a familiarity with his word, read and studied in the Church under the guidance of her legitimate pastors.*

Verbum Domini (The Word of God in the Life & Mission of the Church) - Benedict XVI - Paragraph 84



It is a privilege and a serious responsibility to be part of the Franciscan Family. We are not born into this Franciscan Family. Rather, we are called by the Holy Spirit to follow the charism of St Francis of Assisi. The Holy Spirit gives the call freely. None of us can say we deserve it. We can only be thankful that we received it. With the call comes the responsibility for a total embrace of the spirit of St Francis. It requires a lifelong openness to personal growth in understanding more fully and embracing with greater commitment this special call. Members of the Franciscan Family assist one another in their search for a faithful response to Francis' spirit. Whether we belong to the First Order, the TOR, the Second Order, the OFS, or other branches of the Franciscan Family, we are linked by a common call of the Spirit. To be unfaithful to this commitment to follow Francis is a serious violation of our Franciscan call.

Franciscan documents contain many words that point out the relationships we have within our Franciscan family. Words like *life-giving union* and *vital reciprocity* indicate the kind of gift we offer one another. There is no exception for any member of the Franciscan Family. We are responsible to support, animate, encourage, dialogue, and collaborate with one another to achieve the vision of Francis in our lives. The First Order and TOR Constitutions support our faithfulness in achieving the goal of our common Franciscan charism. For example, read these words from the Capuchin Constitutions:

*Let us cooperate with the Secular Franciscans that their fraternities may progress as communities of faith endowed with a special effectiveness for evangelization, as well as in the formation of individual members. Thus they may spread the Kingdom of God not only by the example of their life, but also by various kinds of apostolic activity.*



Capuchin Constitutions (1990) - Article 152.2

In another place the Capuchin Constitutions offer a specific motive for the entire Franciscan Family to "work together." The other 1st Order/TOR Constitutions contain similar supportive ideas.

*Within the ambit of the Franciscan Family, the Secular Franciscan Order occupies a special place that both shares and promotes its authentic spirit, esteemed as necessary for the fullness of the Franciscan charism.*

Capuchin Constitutions(1990) - Article 95.1

But quoting documents is not the same as embracing the vision to be lived by members of the Franciscan family. If documents could make us holy we would amaze the world! It is only when words on paper are given flesh in Franciscan hearts and actions that we build (and rebuild) the Kingdom of God on earth.

The perspective with which we interpret life comes from incarnational theology. We believe that *God is LOVE*. As such, the actions of God flow from his nature, i.e. a loving nature. Coming among us in Jesus is an action of outgoing love, offering us a human form for God's love. Jesus is the model of the love of God translated into human affairs. While not neglecting the reality of judgment, we choose to believe that even in judgment, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit act out of love.

Jesus comes with *love*, not condemnation. Jesus reveals the *truth* shared by the Father. The Trinity reveals the *life* we will live when, in faith, we accept the *word* that Jesus proclaims. Franciscans are motivated and guided by the words of Scripture which are fundamental ingredients of our lives. *God is love*. God's call invites us to offer alternatives to greed, violence, and exploitation that are too common among people. The Franciscan way seeks forgiveness and dialogue, not unforgiveness and bitterness. We seek reconciliation rather than revenge. Gospel values help us see with clearer vision, to act with greater courage, and to offer positive alternatives to people issues. Like Francis, we seek justice that blossoms from love rather than injustice that comes from revenge, unforgiveness, or greed. We unceasingly work for peace, knowing that it is always needed. Peace (Shalom) creates an environment where people can live in a way that is both human and humane. Franciscans are in the forefront in establishing the justice that allows peace to exist. God's love, made present through the Holy Spirit, enables us to

offer Jesus' vision of peace to all people. The Franciscan Family shows how life is lived when the Gospel is taken seriously. The Franciscan spirit teaches us to live the Gospel and offer a concrete example for people to see and, hopefully, to follow.

Spiritual Assistants, (whether they are religious, clergy, OFS men and women, or people from other communities), assist OFS members to achieve the goal given them by Jesus through his Church. Spiritual Assistants make present the family influence in the life of the OFS. They relate not only to the OFS but to the First Order/TOR. SAs encourage relationships with the 2nd Order women as well as Third Order religious communities. SAs assist the OFS but also receive assistance from the OFS and the Franciscan family.

Spiritual assistants, even those who do not belong to the Franciscan religious family, serve not only the OFS but the Provinces of the First Order or TOR that appoint them. Their assistance reflects a dedicated spirit of service to local, regional, national or international councils.



People who believe in Jesus and embrace the life of the Spirit, find that learning never ceases. Franciscans realize that *ongoing formation* is an ordinary part of life for the Franciscan Family. We face new challenges, new situations, new popes, new parish situations, differing understanding of Church teaching, new life situations, and a host of things that require us to enrich our understanding of the faith and social issues. Franciscans delight in new insights - and God always has "more" for us. *Ongoing formation*, whether we are spiritual assistants or OFS members, is just that - *ongoing!*

*I have told you these things while I am still with you; but the advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have told you.*

John 14:25-26

*After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them: "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord - and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ... If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."*

John 13:12-17

3. Rule 2 *From the beginning, the Secular Franciscan Order has had its own proper place in the Franciscan Family. It is formed by the organic union of all the Catholic fraternities whose members, moved by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves through profession to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis, in their secular state, following the Rule approved by the Church.*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 1.3

4. *The Holy See has entrusted the pastoral care and spiritual assistance of the Secular Franciscan Order, because it belongs to the same spiritual family, to the Franciscan First Order and Third Order Regular (TOR). These are the "institutes" who are responsible for the "altius moderamen," referred to by Canon 303 of the code of Canon Law. (cf. Page 83 in this Handbook)*

OFS General Constitutions - Article 1.4

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*Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance.  
Where there is patience and humility, there is neither anger nor disturbance.  
Where there is poverty with joy, there is neither greed nor avarice.  
Where there is rest and meditation, there is neither anxiety nor restlessness.  
Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance, there the enemy cannot have  
a place to enter. Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment,  
there is neither excess nor hardness of heart.*



## DIALOGUE AND DEBATE

Understanding the situation

**COMMENT:** Many of us are familiar with the debates that take place during a political campaign. The goal is often to make the "other guy or gal" look bad, or foolish, or uninformed, or not competent for the job. Sometimes the truth gets mangled in the middle of these debates. People seek to come out the "winner" and get elected. But politicians do not have a copyright on this kind of debate. Many, perhaps all of us, want to "win." It's the all-American way! We are not concerned about how the "other" got to thinking the way he or she does. We just know that they are "wrong" and we are "right." That permits us to use any means to make our point and separate us from these awful people who are ignorant, mis-led, poor decision-makers, unfaithful Christians, or whatever is usable to keep them from winning the debate.

I think we see enough of this to know it when we see it or when we ourselves are participants. In our OFS life we DO NOT enter into *debates* that separate us but *dialogue* that keeps us together - even when we disagree. Here is a simple outline of the differences between debate and dialogue. Our Franciscan way of life calls us to dialogue so we can maintain a relationship even when we legitimately disagree on issues. This is not easy when society regularly looks to have a "Winner and a Loser." Choosing dialogue is often counter-cultural but full of gospel values that call for maintaining relationships.

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
The goal of debate is to "win" the argument by affirming one's own views and discrediting other views.	The goal is to understand different perspectives and learn about other views.
People listen to others to find flaws in their arguments.	People listen to others to understand how their experiences shape their beliefs.
People critique the experiences of others as distorted or invalid.	People accept the experiences of others as real and valid.
People appear to be determined not to change their own views on the issue.	People appear to be somewhat open to expanding their understanding of the issue.
People speak based on assumptions made about others' positions and motivations.	People speak primarily from their own understanding and experience.
People oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong.	People work together toward common understanding.
Strong emotions like anger are often used to intimidate the other side.	Strong emotions like anger and sadness are appropriate when they convey the intensity of an experience or belief.

cf. *Dialogue for Difficult Subjects* - Lisa Schirch & David Campt - Page 9

It is normal that Franciscans disagree on some issues. How we deal with disagreement is what is important. Our goal is to understand how the "other" came to their conclusions. When we understand their pattern of thought we have a better understanding of the "Other." That allows a relationship to persist even when we disagree. But if we declare ourselves the winner or the wiser, the "other" is the loser or ignorant. The "other" will often (not always) have no desire to maintain a relationship with us.

**COMMENT:** As the book, *Dialogue for Difficult Subjects*, puts it, effective dialogue may require a facilitator if the material requires it. The facilitator guides the discussion, creating good ground rules to



keep things on target. The guidance of the facilitator keeps the conversation in a true dialogical process. The facilitator does not decide who won as in a debate. Neither does the facilitator decide who is right or wrong. The facilitator creates an atmosphere where both sides *hear* the "other" and understand their point of view. Both sides *listen* in order to understand the "other."

Most of us face the temptation to prepare our response while the "other" is talking. Or we may be evaluating what we hear instead of listening in order to understand. In such cases we only *partially listen* and may miss important elements of the conversation. *Listening* requires us to put aside our ideas and beliefs for the moment and focus on the words and experiences the "other" reveals. Such *listening* gives us a clearer understanding of how the "other" came to his/her conclusions. A good listener actually hears what is being said without judging it but seeking to understand it.

From a spiritual point of view, this manner of listening requires an "abandonment" of our personal viewpoint for the moment. We allow ourselves to HEAR the words and ideas of the "other" and deepen our understanding of their point of view. After such listening we may or may not agree. But we have a clearer understanding of the ideas and experiences that led the "other" to their conclusions. We expect the same "abandonment" in the "other" who listens to "our" reasons for the conclusions we have reached.

There are qualities that hinder understanding. Anyone who believes he or she already knows the whole truth will not see the need for dialogue. We then ignore the ideas or experiences of the "others" and separate from them. We only communicate if the "others" are ready to listen to "our" truth. We do not give them the same courtesy. Functioning this way is *NOT dialogue*. When we think we are "right," what's to learn? Dialogue disappears in rigid stubbornness. Dialogue works best when we are open to learn about the ideas and experiences that led the "other" to their conclusions. We accept the fact that we can learn from each other. We acknowledge that no one knows everything.

It is helpful to realize that an atmosphere of listening is similar to a contemplative stance. In contemplation we hand ourselves over to the Trinity. We do not control our contemplative time - the Trinity does. We are "there" and listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, letting the Trinity do what they wish during this quiet time. It is a time for God to be free to do whatever God wishes for us. It might be called "abandonment." It gives the Trinity freedom to work in our lives. Our Franciscan spirit calls us to LISTEN to God. In a similar manner, in dialogue, we respectfully "listen" to the "other." Their words give us a better knowledge and understanding of the "other" and a relationship remains.

Ilia Delio shares some appropriate ideas in her book: *Clare of Assisi, a Heart full of Love*:

*In the cross of Jesus Christ, Clare realizes that God does not hold back anything for himself but rather gives himself completely to us. Divine revelation is the movement of God to poverty. The One who is rich in love comes down to where we are, takes on our humanity, and extends his arms on the cross to embrace us in love. In the mystery of the cross, therefore, Clare sees that God is self-giving and self-gift. God gives everything to us in the gift of the Son or, in Clare's words, the "beloved Spouse." God loves us to such a degree we might say that God "throws it all away" out of love to be God for us.*

*Clare of Assisi - a heart full of love* - Ilia Delio - Page 3

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*... Called like St. Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering **an open and trusting dialogue** of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.*

OFS Rule - Article #6

*Mindful that they are bearer of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should **seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue**, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. ...*

OFS Rule - Article #19



'Francesco' began his conversion with nothing but his trust in God and his readiness to follow the voice from the cross - "*Repair my church ...*"

*The first work that  
blessed Francis undertook,  
after he had gained  
his freedom from the hands of  
his carnally-minded  
father, was to  
build a house of God.  
He did not try  
to build a new one  
but he repaired an old one,  
restored an ancient one.  
He did not tear out  
the foundation,  
but he built upon it,  
always reserving to Christ his  
perogative,  
although unaware of it,  
for no one can  
lay another foundation,  
but that which  
has been laid,  
which is Christ Jesus.*

*Celano - The First book  
Francis of Assisi - The Saint  
Vol I - Page 196*

Franciscans are called to build on the foundation of the Kingdom of God - our savior, Jesus Christ, whom the Father sent among us.

Francis did not allow anything to diminish his joyous desire to evangelize by living the Gospel. He did not try to escape the consequences of the desire given him by God. Nor should we!

When Sister Death came near, he welcomed her with open arms. He had done what was his to do - and he did not waver in that desire which gave him peace and all good.

**Pace et Bene.**



**COMMENT:** These texts from the *Code of Canon Law* are simply available for research if something from OFS documents relates to Canon Law. It is not exhaustive, but only meant to be helpful.

**Canon 113:**

1. *The Catholic Church and the Apostolic See have the nature of a moral person by divine law itself.*
2. *Besides physical persons, there are also in the Church juridic persons, that is, subjects in canon law of obligations and rights which correspond to their nature.*

**Canon 114:**

1. *Juridic persons are constituted either by prescriptions of law or by special concession of the competent authority given through a decree; they are aggregates of persons or of things ordered towards a purpose congruent with the mission of the Church and which transcends the purpose of the individuals that make it up.*
2. *The purpose spoken of in #1 is understood as those which pertain to works of piety, of the apostolate or of charity, whether spiritual or temporal.*
3. *The competent ecclesiastical authority is not to confer juridic personality except upon those aggregates of persons or things which pursue a truly useful purpose and all things considered, have resources which are foreseen to be sufficient to achieve their designated end.*

**Canon 115:**

1. *Juridic persons within the Church are aggregates of either persons or things.*
2. *An aggregate of persons, which cannot be constituted unless it consists of at least three persons is collegial if its members determine its action through participation in making its decisions, whether by equal right or not, according to the norm of law and its own nature; otherwise it is non-collegial.*
3. *An aggregate of things or an autonomous foundation consists of goods or things, whether spiritual or material, and is directed by one or several persons or a college according to the norm of its law and its statutes.*

**Canon 116:**

1. *Public juridic persons are aggregates of persons or things which are so constituted by the competent ecclesiastical authority that, within the limits set for them in the name of the Church, they fulfill a proper function entrusted to them in view of the common good, in accord with the precepts of law; other juridic persons are private.*
2. *Public juridic persons are given this personality either through the law itself or by a special decree of the competent authority expressly granting it; private juridic persons are given this personality only through a special decree of the competent authority granting this personality.*

**Canon 117:**

*No aggregate of persons or things, intending to obtain juridic personality, can achieve it unless its statutes have been approved by the competent authority.*

**Canon 118:**

*They alone represent a public juridic person and act in its name who are acknowledged to have this competence whether by universal or particular law or by its own statutes; they represent a private juridic person who have been given the competency by statutes.*

**Canon 119:**

*With regard to collegial acts, unless provision is made otherwise by law or statutes:*

1. *If it is a question of elections, that action has the force of law which, when a majority of those who must be convoked are present, receives the approval of an absolute majority of those who are present; after two indecisive ballots, the choice is between the two candidates who have obtained the greater number of votes, or, if there are several (with the same number),*

*upon the two who are senior by age; after a third ballot, if the tie remains, the one who is senior by age is considered elected.*

*2. If it is a question of other matters, that action will have the force of law which, when a majority of those who must be convoked are present, receives the approval of an absolute majority of those who are present; if after two ballots it is a tie vote, the presiding officer can break the tie by his or her vote.*

*3. What touches all as individuals must be approved by all.*

**Canon 120:**

*1. A juridic person is of its nature perpetual; nevertheless it is extinguished if it is legitimately suppressed by a competent authority or has ceased activity for a hundred years; a private juridic person is furthermore extinguished if the association is dissolved according to the norm of its statutes, or if, in the judgment of the competent authority, the foundation itself has ceased to exist according to the norm of its statutes.*

*2. If even one member of a collegial juridic person survives, and the aggregate of persons has not ceased to exist according to its statutes, the exercise of all the rights of the aggregate devolves upon that one member.*

**Canon 121:**

*If aggregates, whether of persons or things, which are public juridic persons, are so joined that out of all of them one aggregate is constituted, itself enjoying juridic personality, this new juridic person obtains the goods and patrimonial rights proper to the prior ones, and it also takes upon itself the obligations with which they have been burdened; however, the intention of the founders and donors and acquired rights must be respected, particularly as regards the allocation of goods and fulfillment of obligations.*

**Canon 122:**

*If an aggregate which has public juridic personality is so to be divided so that a part of it is united to another public juridic person, or that a distinct public juridic person is established from the separated part, it is the obligation of the ecclesiastical authority which is competent to make the division, having observed before all else the intention of the founders and donors, acquired rights, and approved statutes, to see to it personally or through an executor.*

*1. that things held in common which are capable of division, both goods and patrimonial rights as well as the debts and other obligations, are divided among the juridic person concerned with the proportion based on equity and justice, taking into account all the circumstances and the needs of each;*

*2. that the use and usufruct of those common goods which are susceptible to division accrue to each juridic person, and that the obligations proper to them fall upon each, to be determined in like manner with proper regard for the due proportion based on equity and justice.*

**Canon 123:**

*Upon the extinction of a public juridic person, the allocation of its goods, patrimonial rights and obligations, is ruled by law and by statutes; if these give no indication, they go to the juridic person immediately superior, with due regard for the will of the founders or donors and for acquired rights; upon the extinction of a private juridic person the allocation of its goods and obligations is regulated by its own statutes.*

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**Canon 298:**

*1. In the Church there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, in which the Christian faithful, either clergy or laity, or laity and clergy together, strive by common effort to promote a more perfect life or to foster public worship or Christian doctrine or to exercise other apostolic works, namely to engage in efforts of evangelization, to exercise works of piety or charity and to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit.*

*2. The Christian faithful should enroll especially in associations which are created or praised or*

*recommended by competent ecclesiastical authority.*

**Canon 301:**

- 1. Competent ecclesiastical authority alone has the right to erect associations of the Christian faithful which set out to teach Christian doctrine in the name of the Church or to promote public worship or which aim at other ends whose pursuit by their nature is reserved to the same ecclesiastical authority.*
- 2. Competent ecclesiastical authority, if it judges it expedient, can also erect associations of the Christian faithful in order to attain directly or indirectly other spiritual ends whose accomplishment has not been sufficiently provided for by the efforts of private persons.*
- 3. Associations of the Christian faithful which are erected by competent ecclesiastical authority are called public associations.*

**Canon 303:**

*Associations whose members lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection while living in the world and who share the spirit of some religious institute under the higher direction (altius moderamen) of that same institute are called third orders or some other appropriate name.*

**Canon 304:**

- 1. All associations of the Christian faithful, whether public or private, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes which define the end of the association or its social objective, its headquarters, its government, the conditions of membership and by whom its policies are to be determined, according to the needs or utility of time and place.*
- 2. They are to choose a title or name for themselves which is adapted to the usage of their time and place, selected especially in view of their intended purpose.*

**Canon 305:**

- 1. All associations of the Christian faithful are subject to the vigilance of competent ecclesiastical authority, whose duty it is to take care that integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them and to watch lest abuse creep into ecclesiastical discipline; therefore, that authority has the right and duty to visit them in accord with the norm of the law and statutes; such associations are also subject to the governance of the same authority according to the prescriptions of the following canons.*
- 2. Associations of any kind whatever are subject to the vigilance of the Holy See; diocesan associations and also other associations to the extent that they work in the diocese are subject to the vigilance of the local Ordinary.*

**Canon 306:**

*In order for a person to enjoy the rights and privileges, indulgences and other spiritual favors granted to the association, it is necessary and sufficient that the person has been validly received into it and not legitimately dismissed from it, in accord with the prescriptions of the law and the proper statutes of the association.*

**Canon 307:**

- 1. The reception of members is to be done in accord with the norms of law and statutes of each association.*
- 2. The same person can be enrolled in several associations.*
- 3. Members of religious institutes can enroll in associations in accord with their own law with the consent of their Superior.*

**Canon 308:**

*No one who has been legitimately enrolled may be dismissed from an association except for a just cause in accord with the norm of law and the statutes.*

**Canon 309:**

*Legitimately constituted associations have the right, in accord with the law and the statutes, to issue particular norms respecting the association itself, to hold meetings, to designate moderators, officials, other officers and administrators of goods.*

**Canon 311:**

*Members of institutes of consecrated life who preside over or assist associations in some way united to their institute are to see to it that these associations give assistance to the works of the apostolate in a diocese, especially cooperating, under the direction of the local Ordinary, with associations which are ordered to the exercise of the apostolate in the diocese.*

**Canon 312:**

*1. The authority competent to erect public associations is:*

- (1) the Holy See for universal and international associations;*
- (2) the conference of bishops in its own territory for national associations, that is, those which are directed by their founding purpose toward action in the whole nation.*
- (3) the diocesan bishop in his own territory for diocesan associations but not the diocesan administrator; however, these associations are excepted for whose erection the right has been reserved to others by apostolic privilege.*

*2. The written consent of the diocesan bishop is required for the valid erection of an association or a branch of an association in a diocese, even if this is done in virtue of apostolic privilege; however, the consent given by a diocesan bishop for the erection of a house of a religious institute also allows for the erection in the same house or church attached to it, of an association proper to the institute.*

**Canon 313:**

*A public association as well as a confederation of public associations is constituted a juridic person by the decree by which it is erected by competent ecclesiastical authority in accord with the norm of canon 312; it also thereby received a mission to pursue the ends which it proposes for itself in the name of the Church, to the extent that such a mission is required.*

**Canon 314:**

*The Statutes of any public association as well as their revision or change requires the approval of the ecclesiastical authority which is competent to erect the association in accord with the norm of canon 312 #1.*

**Canon 315:**

*Public associations on their own initiative can begin undertakings in keeping with their character, and they can direct them in accord with their statutes, but under the further direction of the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in canon 312, #1.*

**Canon 316:**

- 1. One who has publicly rejected the Catholic faith or abandoned ecclesiastical communion or been punished with an imposed or declared excommunication cannot be validly received into public associations.*
- 2. Those legitimately enrolled who fall into situations mentioned in #1, after a warning to be dismissed from the association, observing the association's statutes and reserving the right of recourse to the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in canon 312, #1.*

**Canon 317:**

- 1. Unless otherwise provided in the statutes, the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in canon 312, #1, has the right to confirm as moderator of a public association the person elected by the association or to install the one presented or to name the person by his own right; the same ecclesiastical authority also names the chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant, having heard the major official of the association where this is expedient.*
- 2. The norm stated in #1 is also valid for associations erected outside their own churches or houses by members of religious institutes in virtue of apostolic privilege; however, in associations erected by members of religious institutes in their own church or house, the nomination or confirmation of the moderator and chaplain belong to the superior of the institute, in accord with the statutes.*
- 3. In associations which are not clerical, lay persons can exercise the office of moderator; the chaplain or ecclesiastical assistant shall not assume that role unless the statutes provide otherwise.*

*4. Those who exercise leadership in political parties are not to be moderators in public associations of the Christian faithful which are directly ordered to the exercise of the apostolate.*

**Canon 318:**

- 1. In special circumstances where grave reasons require it, the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in canon 312, #1, can designate a trustee who is to direct the association temporarily in the name of the authority.*
- 2. The one who named or confirmed the moderator of a public association can remove the moderator for a just cause, having heard both the moderator and the major officials of the association in accord with the norm of the statutes; however, the one who named the chaplain can remove him in accord with the norms of canons 192-195.*

**Canon 319:**

- 1. Unless other provision has been made, a legitimately erected public association administers the goods which it possesses in accord with the norm of the statutes under the higher direction (altius moderamen) of the ecclesiastical authority mentioned in canon 312, #1, to whom the association must render an account of the administration each year.*
- 2. The association must also render to the same ecclesiastical authority a faithful account of offerings and alms which it collects.*

**Canon 320:**

- 1. Associations erected by the Holy See can be suppressed only by the Holy See.*
- 2. Associations erected by a conference of bishops can be suppressed by the same conference for grave reasons; associations erected by a diocesan bishop can be suppressed by him, also associations erected through an apostolic indult by members of religious institutes with the consent of the diocesan bishop.*
- 3. A public association is not to be suppressed by competent authority without having heard its moderator and other major officials.*

**Canon 327:**

*Lay members of the Christian faithful are to esteem greatly associations established for the spiritual purpose mentioned in canon 298, and especially those which propose to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit and in this way greatly foster an intimate union between faith and life.*

**Canon 328:**

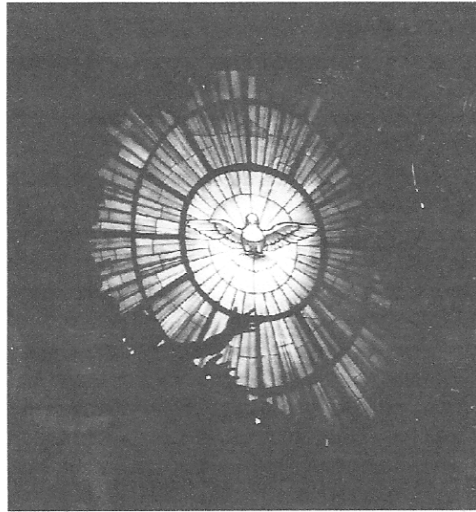
*Those who preside over associations of the laity, even those associations erected in virtue of apostolic privilege, are to see to it that they cooperate with other associations of the Christian faithful, where it is expedient, and willingly assist the various Christian works especially in the same territory.*

**Canon 329:**

*Moderators of associations of the laity are to see to it that the members of the association are duly formed for the exercise of the apostolate which is proper to the laity.*

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*The Human life is sacred because from its beginning  
it involved the creative action of God and remains forever  
in a special relationship with the Creator, who is its sole end.  
God alone is the Lord of life from its beginning until its end;  
no one can under any circumstances claim for himself  
the right directly to destroy an innocent human being.*



Blessed John XXIII, in his opening address to the Second Vatican Council, proposed five points to achieve the goal of Vatican II.

1. *Be filled with hope and faith.* Do not be prophets of gloom. "Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which by men's own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward God's superior and inscrutable design."
2. *Discover ways of teaching the faith more effectively.* "The greatest concern of the ecumenical council is this; that the sacred deposit of Christian doctrine should be guarded and taught more efficaciously."
3. *Deepen the understanding of doctrine.* Authentic doctrine "should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine and deposit of the faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another."
4. *Use the medicine of mercy.* "Errors vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun. The Church has always opposed these errors. Frequently she has condemned them with the greatest severity. Nowadays the Spouse of Christ prefers to make use of the medicine of mercy rather than that of severity. She considers that she meets the needs of the present day by demonstrating the validity of her teaching rather than by condemnation."
5. *Seek unity within the Church, with Christians separated from Catholicism, with those of non-Christian religions, and will all men and women of goodwill.* "Such is the aim of the second Vatican Ecumenical Council which ... prepares, as it were, and consolidates the path toward that unity of mankind where truth reigns, charity is the law and whose extent is eternity."

United State Catholic Catechism for Adults - USCCB - Pages 21-22

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*The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in the family circle.  
It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world  
and open to every group of the faithful.  
In these fraternities the brothers and sisters strive for perfect charity  
in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves  
to live the Gospel in the manner of Saint Francis  
by means of this rule approved by the Church.*

1978 OFS Rule - Article 2