

# STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

*Rome, 2009*



## CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS GENERAL OF THE FRANCISCAN FIRST ORDER AND TOR

Dearest brother Ministers Provincial and Custodes, May the Lord give you peace!

With this letter, the Conference of Minister Generals of the First Order and the TOR has wanted to reach out to all of you in order to express our gratitude for the generous service of pastoral and spiritual care that you offer in the area of your respective jurisdictions. We especially appreciate your service to the fraternities of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) and the Franciscan Youth (YouFra) dispersed throughout the world. Such assistance, which is the most important service entrusted to us by the Church with regard to the secular Franciscans, has been in existence for eight centuries now and it manifests itself as a true sign of our extraordinary sense of family, in the context of our lifegiving reciprocal communion. This communion among Franciscan Orders should be always stronger, more appealing and prophetic within our common mission in the Church and society.

In this year, as we celebrate the VIII Centennial of the birth of our charism, our hearts are filled with gratitude and marvelous memories of the already historic Chapter of Mats – celebrated as Franciscan Family in Assisi last April. We want to encourage you to continue accompanying the SFO and YouFra fraternities with a new enthusiasm and a new impetus. To this end we also recall the

invitation of our Holy Father Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo, in the unforgettable encounter at the end of the aforementioned Chapter. On that occasion he encouraged us, with paternal love, to go out, with confidence and courage, to proclaim Christ's Gospel and its beauty to all, and to set out again to repair today the Lord's house, the Church, as Francis did.

Aware of our common calling and mission, we wish therefore to make together the charism of our common Seraphic Father present in the life and mission of the Church, in various ways and forms, yet in life-giving reciprocal communion, which is characteristic of our Order from the earliest days. In fact, from the beginning of the charism, the bonds between Friars Minor and secular penitents who wished to follow a way of life similar to that of Francis and his friars were very much alive and fraternal. From their testimony and from the itinerant preaching, other forms of Franciscan life were born around the friars – either active or eremitic and contemplative – that brought together religious, lay people and clerics in a new spiritual family, the Franciscan family.

Among the diverse ways of life that still exist in the Franciscan Family, that of 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

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spiritual and pastoral care. We are responsible for the higher direction (the *altius moderamem*, of which can. 303 CCL speaks), that seeks to guarantee the fidelity of the SFO 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. SFO Const 85.1-2).

This is where our office and our responsibility derive from, since

we are called, as major Superiors, to exercise this office personally or through our delegates, the spiritual Assistants, to guarantee pastoral and spiritual care to every single fraternity.

Even today, after 31 years since the approval of the latest Rule by Pope Paul VI, and with the General Constitutions approved in October 2000 by the CIVCSVA, the SFO and YouFra are in need of spiritual and pastoral assistance which help them in their journey of faith and of holiness, in their specific mission and to acquire a sound Christian and Franciscan formation.

For this reason, and as a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, upon request of the Councils at the various levels, we Major Superiors are called to appoint spiritual Assistants, selecting them with careful discernment so that they may be suitable for this service. Besides this, we should foster their specific formation so that they may also be prepared to offer an authentic spiritual assistance, which is well grounded in Franciscan spirituality. In this way, they can effectively support seculars who are responsible for formation and their respective Councils in the field of initial and ongoing formation of secular Franciscans. This is also valid for all other persons which we can appoint as spiritual Assistants, in cases where no friars are available, according to the new SFO General Constitutions (art. 89). Once they are appointed, spiritual Assistants should not be left on their own, but rather supported and encouraged by their community and their major Superior, with a true sense of family, so that they may work with our secular brothers and sisters with enthusiasm and love.

Likewise, it is absolutely necessary to make sure that fraternities are not deprived of this essential guide and that, at the same time, the indisposition of Franciscan friars or sisters does not result in the disappearance of any secular fraternity.

A subject which we consider equally important is collegiality in the service of spiritual assistance to the SFO-YouFra fraternities at the levels above the local Fraternity. This characteristic offers, first of all to us friars, a valuable occasion to collaborate among ourselves in the field of assistance and, at the same time, it becomes a concrete sign of the fraternal affection which the First

Order and the TOR foster for the SFO and YouFra.

Certainly a key instrument that helps us to better understand and carry out this service well are the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO*, approved by our Conference in March 2002. After seven years since their approval, the Conference of General Assistants has informed us that the Statutes have been received very well throughout the world and have produced indeed abundant fruit in the service of the SFO and YouFra.

And so now, based on their experience, the General Assistants have now presented to us new changes to some articles of the Statutes for our approval. In their opinion these changes can help to better clarify the service of spiritual assistance. After a careful examination, we have approved them and we now send them to you as an attachment to this letter.

To conclude this letter we want to thank you and all spiritual Assistants again for your service and to encourage you even more in assisting, promoting and taking care of the SFO and YouFra fraternities throughout the world, with interest and special affection, as we remind you of the words addressed by Encarnacion del Pozo, SFO Minister General, to the friars present at the International Chapter of Mats (Assisi, April 16, 2009):

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“Pastoral care and spiritual assistance to the SFO should flow from love and fidelity to one’s vocation and from the desire to share it, rather than from the juridical norm, respecting the nature of the secular fraternity and giving preference to the testimony of Franciscan life and especially to fraternal presence”.

We thank the Lord for each one of our brothers and sisters of the SFO and YouFra who, with love and courage, follow in the footprints of our seraphic father St. Francis in the joys and sufferings of this world, promoting Franciscan spirituality in the spheres of family life, work, culture, politics, sports and in many other areas of ecclesial and social life.

Let us always remain united in the journey and in bearing witness, together with the SFO and YouFra, in the ways of the Lord, and in the realities where men and women of our time live.

May the Lord be with us through his Spirit so that we may be faithful to our calling and our mission.

Rome, October 4, 2009.

Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM

*Minister General*

Fr. Mauro Jöhri, OFMCap.

*Minister General*

Fr. Marco Tasca, OFMConv.

*Minister General*

Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR

*Minister General*

## CONFERENCE OF GENERAL MINISTERS OF THE FRANCISCAN FIRST ORDER AND THE TOR

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Dear Br. Valentín,

In a letter of last February 13, in the name of the Conference of General Assistants of the Secular Franciscan Order, you sent us the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*, revised after a careful and thorough study and based on the General Constitutions of the SFO, definitively approved on December 8, 2000 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

It is my pleasure to inform you that our Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR, at its meeting of March

25, 2002, **approved these Statutes** which, by the act of approval, enter immediately into force, substituting the preceding ones approved in 1992.

The general Ministers entrust to the Conference of General Assistants the task making these new Statutes known to all brothers of the Franciscan First Order and the TOR and to foster its understanding and study. This instrument can thus serve as a basis for our fraternal service to the SFO and guide us all in our relations with the SFO according to our own vocation and the specific nature of the SFO itself.

On this occasion, also in name of the other general Ministers, I thank you and the other general Assistants of the SFO for your generous and constant service.

Wishing you and the other Assistants a Happy Easter, Your Brother,

C.c.: Emanuela De Nunzio

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## **STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

### **Title I: General Principles**

Minister gen. OFMConv Minister gen. TOR

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Rome, March 28, 2002

## **Art. 1**

1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the SFO, 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<sup>1</sup>.
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<sup>2</sup>.
3. Therefore, as a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, religious superiors must assure spiritual assistance to all the fraternities of the SFO<sup>3</sup>.

## **Art. 2**

1. The spiritual and pastoral care is provided as a two-fold service:
  - a) the fraternal office of the *altius moderamen* on the part of the major Superiors<sup>4</sup>;
  - b) spiritual assistance to the fraternities and their Councils.
2. The purpose of the *altius moderamen* is to guarantee the fidelity of the SFO to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family<sup>5</sup>.
3. The purpose of spiritual assistance is to foster communion with the Church and with the Franciscan Family through witness and sharing of Franciscan spirituality, to cooperate in initial and on-going formation of secular Franciscans and to express the fraternal affection of the religious towards the SFO<sup>6</sup>.

### **Art. 3**

1. This two-fold service completes but does not substitute for the secular councils and ministers whose responsibility it is to guide, coordinate, and animate the fraternities at the various levels<sup>7</sup>.
2. It is exercised according to these present Statutes, common to the four religious Orders (OFM, OFMConv, OFMCap, TOR) and must be performed collegially at all levels above the local level<sup>8</sup>.

### **Art. 4**

1. The purpose of the present Statutes is to define, in a unified and concrete way, the service of the spiritual and pastoral care of the SFO, taking into account the unity of that same Order.
2. These Statutes are approved by the Conference of General Ministers. The Conference has the right of modification and authentic interpretation.
3. Those provisions which do not agree with the present Statutes are abrogated.

<sup>1</sup> See *SFO Const* 85.1: “From Franciscan history and from the Constitutions of the First Order and the TOR, it is clearly evident that these Orders recognize that they are committed to the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the SFO in virtue of their common origin and charism and by the will of the Church. See *Constitutions OFM*, 60; *Constitutions OFM Conv.*, 116; *Constitutions OFM Cap.*, 95; *Constitutions TOR*, 157; *Rule of the Third Order of Pope Leo XIII*, 3,3; *Rule approved by Paul VI*, 26.

<sup>2</sup> see *SFO Rule* 1<sup>3</sup> see *SFO Const* 89.1<sup>4</sup> see *CCL* 303<sup>5</sup> *SFO Const* 85.2<sup>6</sup> see *SFO Const* 89.3; 90.1<sup>7</sup> see *SFO Const* 86.2<sup>8</sup> see *SFO Const* 87.1; 88.5; 90.3

## **Title II: The Role of the Major Superiors**

## *a. General Principles*

### **Art. 5**

1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the SFO, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the duty above all of their general and provincial ministers<sup>9</sup>.
2. They exercise their office through:
  - . a) the establishment of local fraternities;
  - . b) pastoral visits;
  - . c) spiritual assistance.
3. They may exercise this office personally or through a delegate<sup>10</sup>.
4. 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<sup>11</sup>.
5. They should also foster the formation and the interest of their own religious in the SFO and ensure a specific preparation for the Assistants so that they will be suitable and well-prepared<sup>12</sup>.
6. Finally, they should approve the internal by-laws of the Conference of the Spiritual Assistants at all levels.

### **Art. 6**

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 SFO 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 First Order or the TOR<sup>13</sup>.

2. Any transfer of a local fraternity to the pastoral care of another religious Franciscan Order is done according to the procedures established by the national statutes of the SFO<sup>14</sup>.
3. The pastoral visit is a privileged moment of communion of the First Order and the TOR with the SFO. It is carried out also in the name of the Church and serves to guarantee fidelity to the Franciscan charism and to foster communion with the Church and with the Franciscan Family<sup>15</sup>.

#### **Art. 7**

1. The major Superiors of the First Order and the TOR 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<sup>16</sup>.

#### *b. The General Ministers*

#### **Art. 8**

1. The general Ministers exercise collegially the *altius moderamen* and the pastoral assistance in regard to the SFO as a whole<sup>17</sup>.
2. It belongs specifically to the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR:

<sup>9</sup> see *SFO Rule 26*; *SFO Const 85.2* <sup>10</sup> see *SFO Const 86.1* <sup>11</sup> see *SFO Const 89.5* <sup>12</sup> see *SFO Const 87.3*; *SFO Rule 26* <sup>13</sup> *SFO Const 46.1*

<sup>14</sup> see *SFO Const 47.2* <sup>15</sup> see *SFO Const 95.1* and 3 <sup>16</sup> *SFO Const 88.4* <sup>17</sup> *SFO Const 87.1*

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a)

b) c)

d)

### **Art. 9**

1. The general Ministers exercise their office towards the SFO in accordance with the universal law of the Church, with their own Constitutions and with full respect for the specific laws of the SFO. They have the faculty to establish, visit, and meet the local SFO fraternities which are assisted by their own Order.
2. In relation to his own Order, it is the responsibility of each general Minister: a) to appoint the general Assistant of the SFO, who, under the authority of the general Minister, looks after all things regarding service to the SFO<sup>21</sup>; b) if needed, to confirm or to appoint the national Assistants belonging to his own Order.

### *c. Provincial Ministers*

### **Art. 10**

1. The provincial Ministers and the other major Superiors exercise their responsibilities towards the SFO in the territory of their own jurisdiction.
2. Where more than one major Superior of the same Order have jurisdiction in the same territory, they are to establish together the most adequate means for carrying out collegially their mission with respect to the regional and national fraternities of the SFO<sup>22</sup>.
3. They are likewise to jointly draw up procedures for the appointment of the national and regional Assistants and also

to establish from which Superiors the national and regional Councils of the SFO should request an Assistant<sup>23</sup>.

## **Art. 11**

1. The provincial Ministers and the other major Superiors assure spiritual assistance to the local fraternities entrusted to their own jurisdiction<sup>24</sup>.
2. It is their specific competence, in the name of their jurisdiction:

to conduct relations with the Holy See concerning legislative or liturgical texts requiring the approval of the Holy See;

to visit the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO<sup>18</sup>; to preside over and to confirm the election of the Presidency of the International Council of

the SFO<sup>19</sup>; if the case arises, to accept the resignation of the general Minister of the SFO<sup>20</sup>.

a) b) c) d)

<sup>18</sup> see *SFO Const* 92.2-3 <sup>19</sup> see *SFO Const* 76.2 <sup>20</sup> see *SFO Const* 83.1 <sup>21</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2-3 <sup>22</sup> *SFO Const* 88.5

<sup>23</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2<sup>24</sup> see *SFO Const* 88.1<sup>25</sup> see *SFO Const* 89.2; 91.3 <sup>26</sup> see *SFO Const* 88.2

to canonically establish new local fraternities and to guarantee them spiritual assistance; to appoint the Spiritual Assistants<sup>25</sup>; 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 SFO and the Fran-

ciscan Youth<sup>26</sup>.

## **Title III: The Role of the Spiritual Assistants**

### *a. General principles*

#### **Art. 12**

1. The Spiritual Assistant is the person designated by the competent major Superior to carry out this service for a specific fraternity of the SFO and of the Franciscan Youth<sup>27</sup>.
2. In order 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 his Order and the SFO, the Spiritual Assistant should preferably be a Franciscan religious, a member of the First Order or the TOR<sup>28</sup>.
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 at any level does he or she not enjoy the right to vote<sup>29</sup>.

#### **Art. 13**

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<sup>30</sup>.
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 of the Chapter.

#### **Art. 14**

1. The pastoral visit is a privileged moment of communion of the First Order and the TOR with the SFO. It is carried out also 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 the unity of the SFO, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church<sup>31</sup>.
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<sup>32</sup>.
3. At the request of the respective Council, a delegate of the Conference of Assistants carries out the pastoral visit, fully respectful of the SFO's own organization and law<sup>33</sup>. 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 SFO of the same level<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> see *SFO Const* 89.2; 96.6 <sup>28</sup> see *SFO Const* 89.3<sup>29</sup> *SFO Const* 90.2; 77.1-2 <sup>30</sup> see *SFO Const* 90.1

<sup>31</sup> see *CCL* 305.1; *SFO Const* 92.1; 95.1 <sup>32</sup> see *SFO Const* 95<sup>33</sup> see *SFO Const* 92.2

<sup>34</sup> see *SFO Const* 92.3

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4. It is recommended that the pastoral and fraternal visits be carried out together, with agreement beforehand on the program. The visitor or the visitors will in good time communicate the object and the program of the visit to the council concerned. 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<sup>35</sup>.
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<sup>36</sup>.

#### **Art. 15**

1. The Assistant is appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the council of the fraternity concerned<sup>37</sup>.
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<sup>38</sup>.
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:
  - a) religious brothers or sisters of other Franciscan institutes;
  - b) secular Franciscans, cleric or lay, specially prepared for such service;
  - c) other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious<sup>39</sup>.

#### **Art. 16**

1. The number of Assistants who are members of the Councils at the various levels shall correspond to the number of Orders which in fact provide assistance to the local fraternities in the sphere of the international, national, or regional fraternity.
2. At the international, national, and regional level, the Assistants, if there are more than one, form a Conference and give their service collegially to the SFO and to the Franciscan Youth<sup>40</sup>.
3. Each Conference of Assistants functions according to its own internal by-laws, approved by their respective major Superiors.
4. The national and regional Statutes of the SFO establish the number of Assistants who will participate at the national or regional Chapter, the way they are selected, and what kind of participation they will have.

<sup>35</sup> see *SFO Const* 93.2 and <sup>36</sup> *SFO Const* 93.3<sup>37</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.3<sup>38</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2; see *above* art. 10 <sup>39</sup> *SFO Const* 89.4

<sup>40</sup> see *SFO Const* 90.3

*b. General Assistants***Art. 17**

1. The general Assistants are appointed by their respective general Minister, after consultation with the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO<sup>41</sup>.
2. They give their service to the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO, form a conference, and collegially see to the spiritual assistance to the SFO as a whole<sup>42</sup>.
3. It is the responsibility of the Conference of general Assistants: a) to collaborate with the international Council and its Presidency in the spiritual and apostolic animation of the SFO and in a special way in the formation of the secular leaders; b) to co-ordinate, at the international level, the spiritual assistance to the SFO and the Franciscan Youth; c) to foster the interest of the friars and their Superiors in the SFO and in the Franciscan Youth; d) to provide for the pastoral visits of the national Councils of the SFO<sup>43</sup> and the presence at the national elective Chapters<sup>44</sup>.

**Art. 18**

1. The general Assistant must keep his general Minister and his Order informed on the life and activities of the SFO and the Franciscan Youth.
2. He shall also deal with matters regarding the service of assistance given by his Order to the SFO and to the Franciscan Youth, meet the local fraternities assisted by his own Order and keep constant fraternal contacts with the Assistants of his own Order.

*c. National Assistants*

## Art. 19

1. The national Assistants of the SFO and the Franciscan Youth are appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the respective national council<sup>45</sup>. Where more than one major Superior of the same Order is involved in the appointment, the norms established together by the Superiors with jurisdiction in the national territory shall be followed<sup>46</sup>.
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<sup>47</sup>.
3. It is the responsibility of the Conference of national Assistants, or to the national Assistant if there is only one: a) 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; b) to provide for the pastoral visits of the regional Councils of the SFO<sup>48</sup> and to ensure a presence at the regional elective Chapters<sup>49</sup>;

<sup>41</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.3 <sup>42</sup> see *SFO Const* 90.3 <sup>43</sup> see *SFO Const* 92.2 <sup>44</sup> see *SFO Const* 76.2 <sup>45</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2 <sup>46</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2 <sup>47</sup> see *SFO Const* 90.3 <sup>48</sup> see *SFO Const* 93.1-2 <sup>49</sup> see *SFO Const* 76.2

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c) to coordinate, at the national level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the Assistants, and the fraternal union among them;

d) to foster the interest of the friars in the SFO and in the Franciscan Youth.

## Art. 20

1. The national Assistant must keep the major Superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the SFO 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 SFO and to the Franciscan Youth, meet the local fraternities assisted by his own Order and keep fraternal and constant contacts with the regional and local Assistants of his own Order.

*d. Regional Assistants*

**Art. 21**

1. The regional Assistants to the SFO and the Franciscan Youth are appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the respective regional council<sup>50</sup>. 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<sup>51</sup>.
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 collegial<sup>ly</sup><sup>52</sup>.
3. It is the responsibility of the Conference of regional Assistants, or to the regional Assistant if there is only one:a) 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;b) to provide for the pastoral visits of the local Councils of the SFO<sup>53</sup> and to ensure a presence at the local elective Chapters<sup>54</sup>;c) to coordinate, at the regional level, the service of spiritual assistance, the formation of the Assistants and the fraternal

union among them;d) to foster the interest of the friars in the SFO and in the Franciscan Youth.

## **Art. 22**

1. The regional Assistant must keep the major Superiors and his Order informed on the life and activities of the SFO 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 SFO and the Franciscan Youth, meet the local fraternities assisted by his own Order in the region and keep constant fraternal contacts with the local Assistants of his own Order.

<sup>50</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2 <sup>51</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.2 <sup>52</sup> see *SFO Const* 90.3 <sup>53</sup> see *SFO Const* 93.1-2 <sup>54</sup> see *SFO Const* 76.3

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### *e. Local Assistants*

## **Art. 23**

1. The local Assistant is appointed by the competent major Superior, according to the law of his own Order, having heard the council of the fraternity concerned<sup>55</sup>.
2. The local Assistant fosters communion within the fraternity and between the fraternity and the First Order or the TOR. 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 in society.

## **Art. 24**

1. The local Assistant, together with the Council of the fraternity, is responsible for the formation of the candidates<sup>56</sup>

and expresses his or her assessment of each of the candidates before profession<sup>57</sup>.

2. Together with the Minister, the Assistant discusses with the brothers or sisters in difficulty, who want to retire from the fraternity or who act in serious opposition to the Rule<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>55</sup> see *SFO Const* 91.3<sup>56</sup> *SFO Const* 37.2<sup>57</sup> *SFO Const* 41.1<sup>58</sup> *SFO Const* 56.1-2; 58.1-2