

## Topics Suggested by Respondents to the “Our Life-Giving Union – Discernment and Discussion” Gathering - 2019

Category	Suggested Topic
<b>Alignment of Friar Provinces to OFS Regional and Local Fraternities.</b>	<p>The six US OFM Provinces currently engaged in restructuring our fraternal governance into one coast-to-coast province would welcome the opportunity to discuss how to continue the bonds that arise from our current provision of spiritual assistance to the OFS, and if possible, take this moment of renewal as a time to strengthen them.</p> <p><i>The canonical bond between the local Fraternities and the Friars is created at the moment of the canonical erection of the Fraternities. This bond remains with the province that has erected a given Fraternity and obliges it to provide spiritual and pastoral assistance and altius moderamen in the name of the Church.</i></p> <p><i>Article 47 of the OFS General Constitutions specifies this clearly and provides the possibility for the obligation to assist to pass from the Province that erected the Fraternity on to another Franciscan religious order (one of the 4) if that Province is no longer capable of providing the fraternal and pastoral service.</i></p> <p><i>Unfortunately, most people ignore that a Provincial may appoint persons who are not necessarily friars of the same Province (see article 89.4 of the OFS General Constitutions).</i></p> <p><i>If they were aware of this Provinces could always appoint SA. The point is that all assistants (also the SA who are friars of the Province) are ultimately responsible to the Provincial of the Province that appointed them and NOT to a delegate of the Provincial, or to a Regional or National Assistant.</i></p> <p><i>When the OFMs make a single Province in the US, the single Minister Provincial will have to appoint the Spiritual assistants to each of the OFM erected local Fraternities in the whole of the United States.</i></p> <p><i>If, e.g., the OFMs no longer have friaries in a certain area, and in the same area there are TOR, or OFMCaps or OFMConv they can pass the obligation on to another order that is willing to accep the responsibility.</i></p>
	<p>I would like to see a more even distribution of work among the PSA's. Some have many fraternities and regions and some have fewer.</p> <p><i>The more even distribution of work can be arranged collectively by the four religious Orders for the OFS Regional Fraternities, while the assistance to local Fraternities must be arranged within the Province/Provinces of the Order that erected the local Fraternities.</i></p>
<b>Spiritual Assistant Training and Ongoing Formation</b>	<p>The on-going development of the curriculum and methodology of the training courses for SA's and the possibility of continued on-going formation in Franciscan Spirituality. Might an experienced SA sponsor be assigned to a newly appointed SA also?</p> <p><i>Formation of SA is indispensable. Most problems arise due to the ignorance of OFS Rule, Gen. Const., History and Nature of the OFS, origin of the Franciscan Family etc. by most friars.</i></p> <p><i>Formation must be provided by Provincials (even if most of them know very little about the OFS) with the help of senior well prepared SA and competent and well-prepared OFS members.</i></p>
	<p>The steps to appoint a Regional SA (and team) to direct a SA class.</p> <p><i>A Regional SA should have a positive sufficiently long experience as a SA to a local OFS fraternity. The nature of service of SA in the Regions is different from that of the local fraternities. Regional SA is collegial and does not go in as much depth as in local fraternities, with perhaps some exceptions in the case of pastoral visits.</i></p>



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	Ongoing formation for local Spiritual Assistants.
<i>Every year in Italy there is a period for ongoing formation for SA in January in Assisi. The annual course lasts one week and is given by experienced Friars and competent OFS members. Perhaps the US can take this as a model and provide some kind of ongoing for SA on a yearly basis.</i>	
	Appropriate training for friars who are appointed Spiritual Assistants and Regional Spiritual Assistants – especially when they have not had any contact with or worked with Secular Franciscans.
<i>Provinces should provide to their novices and simply professed friars formation on Franciscan history, origins of the Franciscan Family, history and nature of the OFS, reality of the OFS of today.</i>	
<i>It would be useful to organize formation meetings also for friars in solemn vows. In Italy (and elsewhere) no such formation is provided to the friars at any stage of their formation.</i>	
	How do we make provinces more aware of the difference between internship and appointment?
<i>This can be done through programs provided for the friars regarding the nature of the OFS.</i>	
<b>Appointment of Spiritual Assistants</b>	Further discussion, and/or decision by Major Superiors to delegate Regional Spiritual Assistants to appoint Local Spiritual Assistants in their respective regions
<i>Appointments should never be delegated to a Regional SA. Provincials must take up this responsibility.</i>	
<i>When Provincials are elected it would be helpful for them to take a formation course on the OFS and of Spiritual and pastoral assistance as well as the altius moderamen. Benedetto Lino shared the following: “In the course of my Franciscan life (55 years) I have always noticed the absolute ignorance of the vast majority of Provincials on these issues. Fr. Andrea Boni OFM, the great canonist would often tell me that if a friar ignores things he will continue to ignore them also after his election as a Provincial – that is, unless he studies. Election does not provide infusion of wisdom and knowledge.”</i>	
<i>When Provincials delegate all responsibilities to Regional SAs, not only do they ignore the obligation of Canon Law but they also open the way to possible severe dysfunctions and abuses.</i>	
	The steps to appoint a Regional SA.
<i>The procedure for this can be discussed and implemented by the major superiors of the First Order and the TOR in the US.</i>	
	If a Secular Franciscan SA’s fraternity has its Altius Moderamen with one province, but the fraternity which they will serve as SA has another, do we need to get permission?
<i>The altius moderamen is be exercised <u>only</u> by the Provincials (personally) of the Provinces that had canonically erected a local fraternity. Provincials can appoint friars from another province or obedience to serve as SA in those fraternities in which they exercise this altius moderaman.</i>	
<b>Communication and Collaboration</b>	Better communication from CNSA and among Spiritual Assistants.
<i>I agree.</i>	



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	Lay involvement at the Provincial Spiritual Assistant level.
<i>In the terminology of the OFS, the term “provincial spiritual assistant” no longer exists.</i>	
<i>There are no longer Provincial Spiritual Assistants but only Regional Assistants because OFS Regions do not coincide with Religious Provinces. Apart from this, there is nothing that would prevent lay involvement.</i>	
	Lay involvement at the CNSA level.
<i>This is certainly a possibility.</i>	
	I would like to see the PSA become part of the Provincial Council meetings – without becoming a counselor. There should be more of a presence of the OFS at the Provincial level than there currently is.
<i>Again, in the terminology of the OFS, the term “provincial spiritual assistant” no longer exists. A provincial can appoint a friar to assist him in his responsibilities with the OFS and is free to invite its representative to participate in Provincial Council meetings.</i>	
	The relationship of spiritual assistants with formation directors.
<i>Article 2.3 of the “Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance” states that “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.” With this in mind, it is essential that SAs work closely with formation directors of local OFS fraternities in providing formation for their members. They can also serve as a valuable resource for religious formators in presenting the OFS to friars in formation.</i>	
<b>National/Regional Gatherings of Spiritual Assistants</b>	I think some sort of “cyclical” gathering of the PSA’s and RSA’s would be very useful – perhaps every other year or so.
<i>I agree. This is something that can be established by the CNSA.</i>	
	More frequent Regional gatherings perhaps and 1 national gathering.
<i>I agree. This is something that can be established by the CNSA.</i>	
<b>Issues and Guidelines</b>	Sexual orientation – i.e., transgender, etc. – accepting into order?
<i>It is important to follow Church’s instruction. I tend to respect individual decisions by people on their lives even if I do not have to necessarily accept them. However, I would be afraid to open the door officially. It could be dangerous and possibly instrumentalized.</i>	
	Taking care of our elderly sisters and brothers.
<i>Elderly brothers and sisters are an absolute must. Fraternity must be always lovingly inclusive and never exclusive.</i>	



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	How does a spiritual assistant today face the challenge of a Franciscan who claims to follow the rule but who's faith is watered down by the world?
<i>This is the same irrespective of whether the person is a Franciscan or a simple Christian.</i>	
	How to address a Regional Spiritual Assistant who tends to overpower the Regional Council.
<i>Replace him.</i>	
	OFS members move because of jobs, retirement etc., and have no fraternity to join.
<i>If there are professed members who have no Fraternities to join, they remain within the Fraternity where they belonged or to the nearest possible and they should maintain a contact with the Fraternity they belong by mail, phone or other. If possible, it would be nice for them to go at least once a year to their Fraternity meeting. Regional Councils should be informed so as to possibly find solutions for these brothers and sisters to maintain a contact with the Order.</i>	
	Dialogue versus discussion or argument.
<i>Yes, dialogue is always preferable.</i>	
	Franciscan response to incivility and political positions.
<i>Franciscans are called to intimately know and be witnesses of the Gospel.</i>	
	Seamless garment of pro-life stance.
<i>The seamless garment approach is a good fit for the Franciscan approach to life issues.</i>	
<b>Franciscan Spirituality</b>	Franciscan spirituality within a busy secular lifestyle.
<i>We should go back to the essential core of it: to be completely Christian <u>like Francis</u> with the same intensity, radicalness, totality and permanence. Spirituality is not made by devotions, or habits or frequentations. It is the intimate relationship we have with our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. We should have it like Francis, in the context of our specific secularity.</i>	
<b>Spiritual Assistant Term Limits</b>	12 year limit for SA being honored
<i>I'm not sure if this is an observation or a question.</i>	
<b>Stipends</b>	Remuneration for services rendered. Budgeting for office of PSA.
<i>It is the Church that requires that the Religious Order provide spiritual and pastoral assistance. It is an obligation imposed by the hierarchic Church. For this reason, the religious Orders that provide the assistance have to pay the costs incurred in the service. However, if the Provinces are poor and the Fraternities have more resources, they (the local Councils) can freely decide to contribute whatever they may.</i>	

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Vocations	How to spread OFS where there is no Franciscan presence in a parish. Use of technology?
<p><i>Vocations are stirred normally by personal contact, personal testimony and mutual knowledge of the people. Technology may help but personal encounters and witnessing is essential.</i></p> <p><i>We should start speaking also in terms of OFS missionaries in creative ways that will be dictated by the local environments and availability of balanced and well prepared people. Enthusiasm is good but it must have deep roots in faith, contents of doctrine of faith and Word of God, and concrete application in life.</i></p>	