

Ideas from the:
Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS (2009)

The Ministers General exercise collegially the altius moderamen and the pastoral assistance in regard to the OFS as a whole.

SA Statutes - Article 8.1

The Ministers General and Provincial of the First Order/TOR, by authority of the altius moderamen, have these responsibilities:

1. The Provincial Ministers and the other major superiors assure spiritual assistance to the local fraternities entrusted to their own jurisdiction.
2. It is their specific competence in the name of their jurisdiction:
 - a) to canonically establish new local fraternities and to guarantee them spiritual assistance;
 - b) to appoint spiritual assistants;
 - c) to animate spiritually, to visit, and to meet the local fraternities assisted by their own Order;
 - d) to keep themselves informed about the spiritual assistance given to the OFS & the Franciscan Youth.

SA Statutes - Article 11.1, .2
 cf. OFS Constitutions - Article 88.2

Authority to Appoint

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.

OFS Constitutions - Article 88.1

The Franciscan major superiors remain responsible for the quality of spiritual assistance and pastoral care, ...

SA Statutes - Article 5.3

**The Ministers Provincial can exercise their service personally or through delegated Provincial Spiritual Assistants.
 cf. OFS Constitutions – Article 86.1**

The major superiors are responsible for the spiritual assistance to the local fraternities which they have established.

OFS Constitutions - Article 88.3

- The assistant is appointed by the competent major superior, after consultation with the council of the fraternity concerned.
- The appointment of the Assistant is made in writing and for a limited time which accumulated cannot be more than twelve years.

SA Statutes - Article 15.1 & 15.3

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.

SA Statutes - Article 23.1

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Who can be appointed?

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 OFS.

SA Statutes - Article 2.3

A friar of the 1st Order or TOR, who is **competent and available**, can be appointed by the major superior to fraternities bonded to his province. The friar needs knowledge and awareness of Franciscan spirituality and how to apply it in daily life. He should be acquainted with the documents that govern the OFS and to take the course - Franciscan Family Connections- Revised 2011.

- 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 (male or female). cleric or lay, **especially prepared for such service**;
 - c. other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious.

SA Statutes - Article 15.4

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Persons chosen to be a SA need knowledge of Franciscan spirituality and understand the application of the OFS Rule in the daily life of the Church and the world. A SA collaborates with and does not dominate the fraternity council nor fraternity members. **Dialogue** is a key process in promoting Franciscan life within the fraternities at all levels. Spiritual Assistants likewise support good leadership development.

Secular Franciscans, appointed as a Spiritual Assistant, should be perpetually professed for five years. They are expected to take the training course: *Franciscan Family Connections - revised 2011.* (FFC)

Some OFS regions have developed programs that can be linked to the *Franciscan Family Connections* - revised 2011. Appointees should, *at the very least*, read: *Franciscan Family Connections* - Revised 2011.

The Provincial or Provincial Spiritual Assistant of the Province to which the candidate's fraternity is bonded, **mentors** the course. Instructions for this process are spelled out in pages i to iv of *FFC*. They can delegate the role of *mentor* to another competent individual.

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Process for selection & training of a Spiritual Assistant

A Provincial or Provincial Spiritual Assistant who has a **qualified** friar available makes the appointment after consulting the appropriate fraternity. If a friar is not available, the fraternity council without a SA can initiate a search for a SA. The qualities listed in *FFC* (Page iv) are required for seeking a SA. Page 4 of this brochure points out possible candidates.

The local council needing a SA, recommends one or more competent persons to the Provincial or PSA of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded. The council(s) includes letters of recommendation from several people who know the candidate well.

When a candidate is selected, the PSA or Provincial initiates the training process. He may *mentor* the training program himself or appoint a *mentor* to conduct the program of *FFC*. After about 12 to 15 months in the program (or sooner). The candidate may begin a period of internship with an experienced SA.

When the *FFC* course is successfully completed,

the *mentor* may offer a certificate to the candidate. (If the *mentor* is someone other than the Provincial or PSA, approval needs to be given by the Provincial or PSA.)

The appropriate Provincial or PSA, after a personal interview, makes the official appointment of the SA to the fraternity in need -or- the individual may be available to serve in another fraternity as needed.

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Role of a Spiritual Assistant

The Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the OFS (2009) spell out responsibilities of a Spiritual Assistant. The Spiritual Assistant can learn SA basics by reading articles 12-16 and 21-24 in the SA's *Statutes* mentioned above. Also read articles 85-95 in the OFS Constitutions.

The Spiritual Assistant is expected to foster insights into Franciscan spirituality and cooperate in the initial and continuing formation of the fraternity. (SA Statutes - Article 13.1, .2). He/she participates actively and votes in the discussions and decisions taken by the council or the chapter. SA's DO NOT vote on financial matters nor in elections.

cf. OFS Constitutions - Article 90.2 I, cf. Statutes of the National Fraternity of the OFS in the USA - Article 6.6.c

The SA is present for council meetings, regular fraternity gatherings and formation sessions and assists in leadership training.

The SA is responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during council and chapter meetings. (Article 13.3) This is done in collaboration with the Secular Franciscans.

Spiritual Assistance to the OFS

- + *Altius Moderamen*;
- + The authority to appoint;
- + Who can be appointed;
- + Process for selection and training;
- + Role of a Spiritual Assistant

Altius Moderamen

The term *altius moderamen* is used by Canon Law in canon 303. It states that:

...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 are called by some other suitable title (e.g. Secular Franciscan Order).

Canon 303

The OFS Constitutions And Altius Moderamen:

The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the duty, above all, of their general and provincial ministers. The altius moderamen, 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 Constitutions – Article 85.2

The *altius moderamen* assigned by the Church to public associations (e.g., the OFS), is entrusted to the Franciscan major superiors who share the same Franciscan charism. The OFS is in life-giving union with the whole Franciscan family.

cf. OFS Rule #1

cf. OFS Constitutions (2000) - Article 85.2