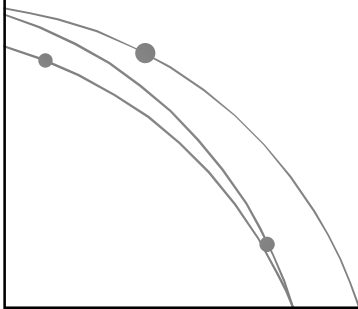


# PREPARING TO BECOME A SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT




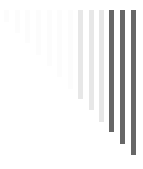
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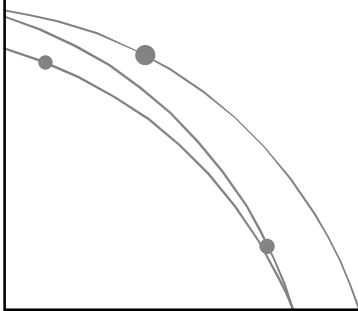
## MATERIALS

- Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the SFO by CNSA – 1996
  - Revised Handbook for Spiritual Assistance by CNSA – 2005
  - Manual for Spiritual Assistants by International General Spiritual Assistants – 2007 (not published)
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- Statutes for the Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO – by CNSA
  - Conference of General Spiritual Assistants - [www.ciofs.org/bka5eni.htm](http://www.ciofs.org/bka5eni.htm)
  - Vatican II documents
    - Lumen Gentium*
    - Gaudium et Spes*
    - Apostolicam Actuositatem*
    - Presbiterorum Ordinis*
- 

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- Life-Giving Union  
CNSA – 1996
  - Franciscan Family Connections  
CNSA – 2007
  - *St. Francis and the Third Order*  
by Raffaele Pazzelli, T.O.R.
  - History of the Secular Franciscan Rule,  
by Rob Stewart, O.F.M.
-

## THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN VISION

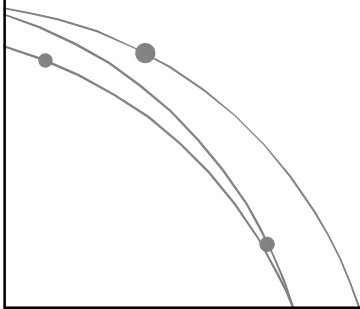


- A focus on Jesus as the center of Franciscan life
- Dedication to Mary's self-giving and prayerfulness
- Faithfulness to the duties proper to the Secular Franciscan's circumstances of life
- Accepting people as a gift of the Lord

- Dedicated to building a more fraternal and evangelical world
- In the forefront of promoting justice
- Esteeming work
- Promoting family and married life

- Respecting all of creating and avoiding exploitation of creation
- Encouraging members to be ready to serve the fraternity, in offices or any way needed
- Understanding and encouraging a financial “fair share” for supporting higher councils

## TRAINING AND UNDERSTANDING THE JOB



- Familiarity with the history of the Secular Franciscan Order

Established by St. Francis as  
Brothers and Sisters of Penance

Rules:

*Memorial Propositi* - 1221

Rule of Nicholas IV - 1289

Rule of Leo XIII - 1883

Rule of Paul VI - 1978

- Familiarity with the documents of the Secular Franciscan Order:
  - SFO Rule of 1978
  - General Constitutions
  - SFO Ritual
  - U.S. Statutes
  - Regional Governance Norms

## **WHO ARE THE SECULAR FRANCISCANS?**

- **Autonomous – one Order that is international**
- **Key to unity is the Regional Fraternity – the link between local fraternities and national fraternities**

- **Can't be autonomous if not united as ONE Order**
- **Can't be SECULAR if dependent on the religious**

- **Seculars are bonded with the religious Franciscans**
- **First Order and T.O.R. have the *altius moderamen* – Canon 303 – pastoral and spiritual care of the SFO**

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS AND THE FRATERNITY**

- Not a “director”
- Not a “leader”
- Not in charge of all spiritual teaching



- Not the secretary or treasurer
- Not an “in absentia” spiritual assistant
- Is to be “suitable and well-prepared” to be a spiritual assistant

Spiritual Assistant’s role:

- (1) Be a witness of Franciscan spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious;
- (2) Collaborate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters

## **GOALS**

- From “director” to “assistant”
- From “commanding” to “serving”
- From being “Father with the last word” to being a member who collaborates with council and minister
- Awareness at all times of the SFOs own identity
- Help SFOs to be aware of their international family

## **WHO *IS* A SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT?**

- A member of the fraternity council
- Has a vote in all things but financial questions and elections
- Has input on all fraternity issues
- Part of the formation team
- Responsible for animation of liturgical celebrations

- As elected council members are servant leaders, so also are spiritual assistants servant leaders.
- Work with councils to give life to our common Franciscan vision
- Proclaim the Franciscan spirit by word, action, prayer and example
- Spiritual assistants share their gifts for the good of the SFO and the Franciscan family

- Vote on acceptance of candidates for profession
- Assist council in preparing future leaders
- Help all the leaders be true animators of the fraternity, remembering it is part of a larger family.
- Explore with council members the way the SFO can properly live their secular Franciscan form of life

## **WHAT COUNCILS NEED**

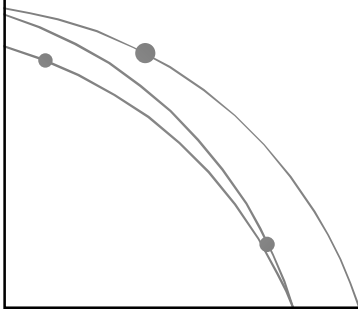
- Guidance to help them remain true to the Franciscan charism
- Active participation by the spiritual assistant in discussion of all issues
- Meaningful help in formation
- A living witness of the Franciscan life
- Encouragement of the council to be peacemakers

- Be a gentle reminder that profession is a lifetime commitment
- Help council seek solutions that maintain a good relationship with all
- Share meaningful experiences of justice and peace
- Be a resource for the council

- Help council understand the principle of subsidiarity and their own responsibilities
- Encourage council to set up meaningful relationships with their elderly and sick members unable to attend meetings.
- Guide them in the Franciscan way of dealing with those who absent themselves regularly.

- Be aware of the necessity of proper balance between the vision and the structure, and between contemplation and action.
- Encourage councils to be creative in resolving difficulties
- Be a skillful listener
- Help the fraternity vary its prayer forms if they are having trouble in that regard

## HELPING IN FORMATION



- Councils need ongoing formation, not just fraternities
- Work in collaboration with the fraternity's formation director
- Remember to continue your own ongoing formation in Franciscan life
- Be always aware of the *secular* status of the SFO

- Strive to help leaders revive the evangelical spirit in themselves and their members
- Help council and fraternity to remember that prayer and action are partners, but must be kept in balance
- Help all to remember and more thoroughly understand their profession

- Be present, as all council members should be from time to time, at initial formation sessions
- Help council and formation team remember that formation must be:
 

Active	Communal	Ecclesial
Secular	Joyful	Open-ended
Centered on Jesus Christ and His Gospel		
In a spirit of simplicity		

- Remind council and formation team to check documents of those in initial formation
- Formation requires an interchange between the formation team and those in formation.
- Help determine if the material in initial formation is influencing the way those receiving it live their lives

- Assist team and those in initial formation to evaluate the influence of Vatican II and its documents
- Don't diminish the fact that the Franciscan way of life is a demanding way
- Emphasize the God-given human dignity of every individual, noting the need for honest self-knowledge



- Encourage all to remember that their priorities must be in favor of the SFO
- Discernment in all things is continually needed and formation must emphasize this.