

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE IN THE DOCUMENTS

Basis for Spiritual Assistance to the
Secular Franciscan Order

SFO Rule, 26

1. As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils on various levels, in keeping with the constitutions, shall ask for **suitable and well-prepared religious for spiritual assistance**. They should make this request to the superiors of the four religious Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 1, 4

The Holy See has entrusted the **pastoral care and spiritual assistance** of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), 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.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 85, 2

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. The *altius moderamen*, of which Canon 303 speaks, belongs to them.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 85, 2 (cont.)

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, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 86

1. The general and provincial ministers exercise their office with respect to the SFO through:

- the establishment of fraternities;
- the pastoral visits;
- the spiritual assistance to the fraternities at the various levels.

They may exercise this office personally or through a delegate.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 86

2. This service 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

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 88, 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 the jurisdiction.* They see to it that their own religious are interested in the SFO and that *capable and well-prepared persons* are appointed for the service of spiritual assistance.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 88, 2

It is the specific competence of the major superiors, in 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 SFO.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 88, 3

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

Art. 88, 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.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 88, 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 SFO.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 89

1. By virtue of the *vital reciprocity* between the religious and the secular members of the Franciscan Family and in regard to the responsibilities of major superiors, spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the SFO at all levels must be assured as a fundamental element of communion.
2. The spiritual assistant is the person designated by the competent major superior to carry out this service for a specific fraternity of the SFO.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 89, 3

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 be a Franciscan religious, member of the First Order or the TOR.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 89, 4

When it is not possible to give such a spiritual assistant to the fraternity, the competent major superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:

- a. religious brothers or sisters of other Franciscan institutes;
- b. diocesan clerics or other persons, specially prepared for such service, who are members of the SFO;
- c. other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 89, 5

The previous authorization of the superior or the local ordinary, when needed, does not exempt the Franciscan major superior of the responsibility for the quality of the pastoral service and of the spiritual assistance given.

SFO General Constitutions

Art. 90

1. The principal task of the assistant is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to cooperate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters.
2. The spiritual assistant is by right, with vote, a member of the council of the fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities. The spiritual assistant does not exercise the right to vote in financial questions.

SFO General Constitutions

Article 91

1. The council of the fraternity at each level requests suitable and prepared assistants from the competent superiors of the First Order and the TOR.
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 and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*.

Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

Art. 2

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.

Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

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.

Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

Art. 7 (cont)

2. They also take care to keep in touch with local Ordinaries who have erected local fraternities of the SFO in accordance with its specific legislation, taking upon themselves the responsibility for their spiritual assistance and pastoral care or entrusting it to one of their priests or to a religious Institute.

Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

Art. 11

1. The provincial Ministers and the other major superiors assure spiritual assistance to the local fraternities entrusted to their own jurisdiction.

Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO

Art. 15

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.