

FORMATION OF A NEW SFO FRATERNITY

BASIC POINTS FOR A NEW FRATERNITY

- Seculars, friars of the First Order and TOR, or Franciscan friars or religious sisters can give birth to an SFO fraternity. Whoever takes the initiative must inform the council of the higher level and keep in touch with it;
- once the request has been examined and approved by the council of the higher level, the group of persons interested and available are recognized as a “group in formation”;
- if there is a local fraternity nearby capable of following up the new group, the council of the higher level appoints it as the “parent fraternity”. If not, the council of the higher level follows up the new group directly;
- if there are professed secular Franciscans belonging to other fraternities in the group, the minister of the parent fraternity gets in touch with those fraternities (GC, 55);
- some members of the group are elected as leaders or provisional council;
- spiritual assistance must be ensured by the competent major superior;
- the parent fraternity must take care of the preparation and motivation of the group and supply practical and juridical orientations.

INTERESTED AND AVAILABLE PEOPLE

The candidates interested in forming a new SFO fraternity are required :

- to have the pre-requisites: “to profess the Catholic faith, to live in communion with the Church, to be of a moral standing, and to show clear signs of a vocation (GC, 39.2);
- to be interested in knowing Saint Francis of Assisi and his spirituality (GC, 40.2);
- to be available to enter into a discernment process of their vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order (GC, 38.1);
- to know and accept the phases of formation (GC, 38-44);
- to have a spirit of conversion (GC, 13.1);
- to lead a fraternal life (GC, 30 ; 53.3);
- to be available to serve the SFO (GC, 32.2).

PREPARATION OF THE GROUP

Once the group in formation has been approved, as a sign of co-responsibility, the local parent fraternity or the council of the higher level:

- designates a member of the local parent fraternity or council of the higher level as the fraternal animator, whose task it is to actively collaborate and guide the group to hold meetings in order to establish a new fraternity; it is his or her responsibility to invite the brothers and sisters to fraternity meetings, prayers, and active collaboration in the animation of the new fraternity and the financing of its activities and works (GC 32.2-3);

- nominates a qualified person for formation, even if the formation of the group will in any case be guaranteed by the council of the local parent fraternity or of the higher level (GC, 46.2; 50.1).

SPIRITUAL ASSISTANCE

As a sign of communion and co-responsibility (SFO Rule, 26), the council of the higher level asks the competent major superior for a Spiritual Assistant to follow up the group (GC, 88.1).

INITIATION OF THE GROUP

After the first meetings, with the help of the fraternal animator, the people interested in forming the fraternity prepare a time-table and a schedule of the planned meetings in order to:

- promote knowledge, interest and fraternal life of the SFO (GC, 31.4; 40.3, 53.3);
- become acquainted with Saint Francis and the Secular Franciscan Order (GC, 40.1-2);
- pray together (GC, 40.3);
- study and reflect on themes of human, Christian and Franciscan formation (GC, 40.3);
- propose a starting date for the time of initiation for those members of the group that request it (GC, 39.1 and 3);
- the time of initiation ends with the rite of admission for those candidates considered suitable by the council of the parent fraternity or of the higher level (SFO Ritual, part I).

PROFESSION

When the time of formation has ended, candidates prepare themselves for temporary and/or perpetual profession.

- the candidates ask the minister of the parent fraternity or of the council of the higher level to make their profession (GC, 41.1);
- immediate preparation for profession can be made with a retreat and reflection on the rite of profession;
- the profession of the new brothers and sisters will be received by the council of the parent fraternity or of the higher level (GC, 46.2);
- the acts of admission and profession are preserved in the records of the new fraternity; copies are sent to the council of the higher level (GC, 46.2).

CANONICAL ESTABLISHMENT

- the valid canonical establishment of a local fraternity requires at least five perpetually professed members (GC, 46.2);
- these brothers and sisters ask the council of the higher level to initiate the process of canonical establishment of the new fraternity;
- the council of the higher level turns to a major superior of the First Order or TOR with jurisdiction in the territory, who accepts the responsibility to guarantee spiritual assistance

and pastoral care of the new fraternity. This major superior is responsible for issuing the decree of canonical establishment (GC, 46.1);

- if the erection of the canonical establishment is outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the First Order or TOR, the written consent of the local Ordinary is necessary, and must be jointly requested by the competent major superior and the minister of the council of the higher level (GC, 46.1) ;
- the Decree is delivered and signed by two witnesses during the rite of canonical establishment (SFO Ritual, III);
- a copy of the Decree of establishment is sent to the council of the higher level (GC, 46.2);
- when a fraternity is canonically established by a delegate of the major superior, it is necessary to have the delegation document besides the Decree of canonical establishment;
- the event will be entered into the Chronicle of the new fraternity as history of the fraternity and a copy will be sent to the council of the higher level.

FIRST CHAPTER

Once the new fraternity has been established it must celebrate its elective chapter in conformity with the Rule, the SFO General Constitutions and the National Statutes.

BIRTH OF THE SFO IN A NATION

- “If there is not yet an SFO fraternity in a nation, it belongs to the Presidency of the CIOFS to make a provision in this regard” (GC, 46.3);
- the person who takes the initiative to establish a fraternity should get in touch with the CIOFS Presidency;
- the intervention of the CIOFS Presidency should be sought for admission and profession of candidates and the canonical establishment of the fraternity.

Rome, 14th June 2002

Encl. 1

FORM FOR THE REQUEST FROM THE REGIONAL COUNCIL

TO THE COMPETENT MAJOR SUPERIOR

The (regional or national) council of _____, at the request of the brothers and sisters of the SFO fraternity in formation, which meets at _____, in the city of _____, asks the Provincial Minister of _____ (or the competent major superior) of the First Order _____, or TOR, to canonically establish this fraternity, either directly or through a delegate, in conformity with the SFO General Constitutions, art. 46 and 47, and the SFO Ritual, and to guarantee the necessary spiritual assistance and pastoral care.

The above fraternity will be integrated with the (regional or national) fraternity of _____.

Date and signature of the regional minister

N.B. This document will be preserved in the archives of the local fraternity and the regional fraternity.

Encl. 2

FORM FOR THE REQUEST
FROM THE COUNCIL AND COMPETENT MAJOR SUPERIOR
TO THE LOCAL ORDINARY

I, the undersigned, _____, provincial minister (or major superior) of the Province of the First Order of _____ or TOR, in conformity with the General Constitutions of my order, art. ____, and the SFO General Constitutions, art. ____;_____, accept the responsibility to canonically establish the new fraternity of _____ in accord with the norms of art. 303 of Canon Law.

Together with my province (jurisdiction), I guarantee to foster spiritual assistance and pastoral care of the new fraternity and to fraternally share with it efforts to transform the world in the evangelic spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi

and I, the undersigned, _____, (regional or national) minister of _____, of the Secular Franciscan Order, together with the regional council and the local fraternity of _____, have ascertained that the brothers and sisters of the new fraternity of _____, will be adequately offered the necessary formation to make their profession of the Rule, or promise of evangelic life, in conformity with our General Constitutions, art. 37-42.

The above fraternity will be established outside the Franciscan houses; therefore, to make these dispositions applicable, we ask Your Excellency to authorize the canonical establishment of this new fraternity, which will be integrated with the (regional or national) fraternity of _____.

Date and signature of the provincial minister

Date and signature of the regional minister

Encl. 3

FORM FOR THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE LOCAL ORDINARY

At the request of _____ and of _____

In conformity with art. 312 of Canon Law, I hereby authorize the establishment of the Secular Franciscan Order fraternity _____, whose seat will be in _____, in my dioceses.

Date and signature of the local Ordinary

Councillor

Encl. 4

FORM FOR THE DECREE OF CANONICAL ESTABLISHMENT

On (date) _____, in conformity with the General Constitutions of my Order, the SFO General Constitutions and Ritual and the norms of Canon Law, I, the undersigned, _____, provincial minister (or major superior, or delegate) of the Province of _____, canonically establish the SFO fraternity of _____, whose seat will be in _____, and which will be integrated with the (regional or national) fraternity of _____.

Our Province commits itself to ensure spiritual assistance and pastoral care of the new fraternity and to nominate a suitable and prepared spiritual assistant as a fundamental element of communion.

In confirmation of the above, I hereby sign and seal the present document in _____, on _____ 20__.

Name and signature of the provincial minister

Provincial secretary

Delivered to the Fraternity on the _____ of _____ 20__.

Name and signature of the SFO regional minister

Witnesses:

Name and signature

Name and signature

N.B. The original documents are to be preserved in the archives of the local fraternity; copies of same are to be preserved in the archives of the religious province and the regional or national fraternity.