



# K O I N Ō N I A

*...together on a journey*

CONFERENCE OF GENERAL SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS TO THE SFO

2010 - 1

Year 17

n. 65

## PRIORITY OF THE WORK OF PRESIDENCY OF CIOFS

### LETTER OF THE MINISTERS GENERAL OF THE FIRST ORDER AND TOR ON ASSISTING BOTH SFO AND YOUFRA

*Br. Martín Bitzer, OFMConv*

#### Introduction

Among the priorities of the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO (CIOFS) is the priority on the part of the First Order (OFM, OFMConv, OFMConv) and TOR to provide spiritual and pastoral assistance to the Secular Franciscans spread across the globe in 112 nations with 65 National Fraternities established, 43 pending establishment, and 4 countries in the process of having their first local fraternities.

Here is an extract of the message addressed by the Minister General of the SFO, Encarnacion del Pozo, to the Friars present during the International Chapter of Mats in Assisi on April 16, 2009:

“...the SFO is committed to formation, for which it needs confident support. It needs spiritual assistants who will actively collaborate, especially in the formation walk, in making our fraternities convincing and consistent with their vocation. It needs spiritual assistants who can help them to fully comprehend the mission that has to be accomplished. Assistants with the awareness that helping today’s youth and adults to discover the true sense of life is indeed an extraordinary task. Please help my brothers and sisters who are striving to be individuals of faith, coherent and exemplary in their lives and courageous in their choices! Help us to be *witnesses!*”

Certainly, all the SFO fraternities must have their Spiritual Assistant and the latter, in turn, must be *prepared and fit* for this kind of service. In order to make the Friars more conscientious of this matter and that Major Superiors realize their responsibilities for the Secular Franciscans, the Ministers General wished to write a letter. This letter, moreover, introduces the newly revised Statutes for the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the SFO (2009) and is as follows:

**CONFERENCE OF THE MINISTERS GENERAL  
OF THE FRANCISCAN FIRST ORDER AND TOR**

Dearest brother Ministers Provincial and Custodes,

May the Lord give you peace!

With this letter, the Conference of Minister Generals of the First Order and the TOR has wanted to reach out to all of you in order to express our gratitude for the generous service of pastoral and spiritual care that you offer in the area of your respective jurisdictions. We especially appreciate your service to the fraternities of the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) and the Franciscan Youth (YouFra) dispersed throughout the world. Such assistance, which is the most important service entrusted to us by the Church with regard to the secular Franciscans, has been in existence for eight centuries now and it manifests itself as a true sign of our extraordinary sense of family, in the context of our life-giving reciprocal communion. This communion among Franciscan Orders should be always stronger, more appealing and prophetic within our common mission in the Church and society.

In this year, as we celebrate the VIII Centennial of the birth of our charism, our hearts are filled with gratitude and marvelous memories of the already historic Chapter of Mats – celebrated as Franciscan Family in Assisi last April. We want to encourage you to continue accompanying the SFO and YouFra fraternities with a new enthusiasm and a new impetus. To this end we also recall the invitation of our Holy Father Benedict XVI at Castel Gandolfo, in the unforgettable encounter at the end of the aforementioned Chapter. On that occasion he encouraged us, with paternal love, to go out, with confidence and courage, to proclaim Christ's Gospel and its beauty to all, and to set out again to repair today the Lord's house, the Church, as Francis did.

Aware of our common calling and mission, we wish therefore to make together the charism of our common Seraphic Father present in the life and mission of the Church, in various ways and forms, yet in life-giving reciprocal communion, which is characteristic of our Order from the earliest days. In fact, from the beginning of the charism, the bonds between Friars Minor and secular penitents who wished to follow a way of life similar to that of Francis and his friars were very much alive and fraternal. From their testimony and from the itinerant preaching, other forms of Franciscan life were born around the friars – either active or eremitic and contemplative – that brought together religious, lay people and clerics in a new spiritual family, the Franciscan family.

Among the diverse ways of life that still exist in the Franciscan Family, that of secular Franciscans – lay and cleric – occupies a very particular place. They recognize Francis as their founder and live the charism within the secular dimension. For them, since they are an integral part of the Franciscan Family and have been historically united to us Franciscan religious, the Church granted the privilege of having the major Superiors of the First Order and TOR as those mainly responsible for their spiritual and pastoral care. We are responsible for the higher direction (the *altius moderamem*, of which can. 303 CCL speaks), that seeks 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 (cf. SFO Const 85.1-2).

This is where our office and our responsibility derive from, since we are called, as major Superiors, to exercise this office personally or through our delegates, the spiritual Assistants, to guarantee pastoral and spiritual care to every single fraternity.

Even today, after 31 years since the approval of the latest Rule by Pope Paul VI, and with the General Constitutions approved in October 2000 by the CIVCSVA, the SFO and YouFra are in need of spiritual and pastoral assistance which help them in their journey of faith and of holiness, in their specific mission and to acquire a sound Christian and Franciscan formation.

For this reason, and as a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, upon request of the Councils at the various levels, we Major Superiors are called to appoint spiritual Assistants, selecting them with careful discernment so that they may be suitable for this service. Besides this, we should foster their specific formation so that they may also be prepared to offer an authentic spiritual assistance, which is well grounded in Franciscan spirituality. In this way, they can effectively support seculars who are responsible for formation and their respective Councils in the field of initial and ongoing formation of secular Franciscans. This is also valid for all other persons which we can appoint as spiritual Assistants, in cases where no friars are available, according to the new SFO General Constitutions (art. 89). Once they are appointed, spiritual Assistants should not be left on their own, but rather supported and encouraged by their community and their major Superior, with a true sense of family, so that they may work with our secular brothers and sisters with enthusiasm and love. Likewise, it is absolutely necessary to make sure that fraternities are not deprived of this essential guide and that, at the same time, the indisposition of Franciscan friars or sisters does not result in the disappearance of any secular fraternity.

A subject which we consider equally important is collegiality in the service of spiritual assistance to the SFO-YouFra fraternities at the levels above the local Fraternity. This characteristic offers, first of all to us friars, a valuable occasion to collaborate among ourselves in the field of assistance and, at the same time, it becomes a concrete sign of the fraternal affection which the First Order and the TOR foster for the SFO and YouFra.

Certainly a key instrument that helps us to better understand and carry out this service well are the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO*, approved by our Conference in March 2002. After seven years since their approval, the Conference of General Assistants has informed us that the Statutes have been received very well throughout the world and have produced indeed abundant fruit in the service of the SFO and YouFra.

And so now, based on their experience, the General Assistants have now presented to us new changes to some articles of the Statutes for our approval. In their opinion these changes can help to better clarify the service of spiritual assistance. After a careful examination, we have approved them and we now send them to you as an attachment to this letter.

To conclude this letter we want to thank you and all spiritual Assistants again for your service and to encourage you even more in assisting, promoting and taking care of the SFO and YouFra fraternities throughout the world, with interest and special affection, as we remind you of the words addressed by Encarnacion del Pozo, SFO Minister General, to the friars present at the International Chapter of Mats (Assisi, April 16, 2009):

“Pastoral care and spiritual assistance to the SFO should flow from love and fidelity to one’s vocation and from the desire to share it, rather than from the juridical norm, respecting the nature of the secular fraternity and giving preference to the testimony of Franciscan life and especially to fraternal presence”.

We thank the Lord for each one of our brothers and sisters of the SFO and YouFra who, with love and courage, follow in the footprints of our seraphic father St. Francis in the joys and sufferings of this world, promoting Franciscan spirituality in the spheres of family life, work, culture, politics, sports and in many other areas of ecclesial and social life.

Let us always remain united in the journey and in bearing witness, together with the SFO and YouFra, in the ways of the Lord, and in the realities where men and women of our time live.

May the Lord be with us through his Spirit so that we may be faithful to our calling and our mission.

Rome, October 4, 2009.

Fr. José Rodríguez Carballo, OFM  
*Minister General*

Fr. Marco Tasca, OFMConv.  
*Minister General*

Fr. Mauro Jöhri, OFMCap.  
*Minister General*

Fr. Michael Higgins, TOR  
*Minister General*

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Link to the:  
***Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO***  
(Ed. 2009)

**ITALIANO**

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## NEWS - CHAPTERS - VISITS - MEETINGS

### **Argentina – Fraternal General Assembly of the OFMConv**

The Friars Minor Conventual celebrated the Fraternal General Assembly in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jan. 10-18. The celebration of this Assembly, in which 150 Friars from across the world participated, focused in-depth on the theme of “Ongoing Formation”. There were alternating moments of prayer, fraternity, and reflections, which allowed to do an in-depth reflection on the topics presented by three speakers: Msgr. Gianfranco Agostino Gardin on *Consecrated Life and Ongoing Formation*; Msgr. Andrés Stanovnik on *St. Francis, Icon of Formation: Franciscan Itinerary of Formation as a “Sequela Christi”*; and P. Marko Ivan Rupnik, SJ on *Life according to the Spirit and Ongoing Formation – Theological-Spiritual Vision of Formation*.

Other contributions that allowed further understanding and personal application of the themes within the Order were offered by different Conventual Friars engaged in different areas of service, such as administration of the Order, formation, being Guardians, revision of the Constitutions, etc. The presentation of new and meaningful experiences, which for some years now have been animating different jurisdictions, have further enriched the reflection and fraternal life of the Assembly.

### **Argentina – National Elective Chapter**

The 10<sup>th</sup> National Elective Chapter of the SFO took place in the area of Saint Anthony of Arredondo, Cordoba in Argentina. Two persons presided over the Chapter: María Aparecida Crepaldi, SFO, Councilor of the CIOFS Presidency for the Portuguese language and Br. Jorge Gustavo Rodríguez Paniagua, OFM, Minister Provincial of the Province of “St. Michael the Archangel” and Delegate of CAS. Additionally, two National Assistants were in attendance: Br. Gerónimo Martina, OFM, e Br. Luis Furgoni, OFMConv. The maturity of the Capitulars was stood out during elections which unfolded in an atmosphere of serenity and transparency. Also, noteworthy was the work carried out by the outgoing Council. Then, it was announced that the next Latin American Congress SFO-YouFra will be in Argentina in 2012. Msgr. Andrés Stanovnik, OFMConv, Archbishop of Corrientes, presided over the Holy Mass and presented the central theme of the Chapter, namely, “Service through a Gospel life.” Miss Silvia Noemi Diana was re-elected National Minister and International Councilor of the SFO in Argentina. After the Elective Chapter, the XXXI Fraternal National Chapter took place until Sunday, Jan. 17 and was attended approximately by 200 Secular Franciscans.

### **Panama – National Elective Chapter**

The National Elective Chapter of the SFO of Panama took place in the “House of the Charismatic Renewal” in the area of San Carlos about 2 hours from the city of Panama. The Chapter was presided over by the Councilor of the CIOFS Presidency María Consuelo Núñez for the Spanish language and by Br. Antonio Reyes, OFM, the SFO Assistant for Venezuela and delegate of CAS. Br. Antonio presented the theme, “Belonging to the Order”. Br. Luis Saldaña, OFM, a Provincial Definitor, was present during the Chapter. Diógenes Sanchez was elected National Minister and International Councilor. It was evident that YouFra has a good rapport with SFO of Panama and we hope that this will carry over into the near future with the establishment of a good rapport with YouFra international.

### **Italy – Meeting with the OFM New Ministers Provincial and Custos**

The two weeklong meeting between the newly elected Ministers Provincial/Custos and the Minister General and his Definitory took place at the OFM General Curia Jan. 18-29. As usual, part of the meeting was also becoming familiarized on Jan. 28 with the different head offices in the Curia. The visits were conducted in three language groups. Each office was able to make a thorough

presentation of its work. Among the offices is that of the Assistant General to the SFO-YouFra, Br Ivan Matic, OFM, who stressed on the role of both the Minister Provincial and Custos as the first responsible for the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the SFO-YouFra. After the presentation, there was some time set aside for sharing, dialogue, questions, and further clarifications.

### **Frascati, Italy – Meeting with the New Ministers Provincial OFMCap**

The newly elected OFMCap Ministers Provincial were summoned to a meeting of animation with the various offices of the General Curia in Frascati, Rome, Jan. 18-23. On Jan. 19, 2010, Assistant General to the SFO and YouFra gave a 15 minutes presentation on “the Minister and His Responsibility toward Both the SFO and YouFra”. Because time was running out, certain problems on the question of spiritual assistance to the SFO were not dealt with in-depth; nevertheless, both the Assistant General and Minister General stressed this responsibility as a priority in the mission of all Provincials. The Provincials, in turn, did not shy away from making known their concerns over the difficulty the Friars have passing from the old concept of assistance to the new one.

### **Chile – III South American Meeting of Franciscan Youth**

Around 200 youth gathered together for 5 days (Jan. 20 – 24, 2010) in the city of Santiago, Chile. In addition to the Chilean youth, other youth came from Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Paraguay, and Peru. The main theme for this gathering and which served as the basis for reflection, sharing, and fraternity was, *I Have Chosen Holy Poverty as My Lady*. As the event unfolded, there was much joy, prayer, sharing, and growth among them. Everyday a reflection was given on a theme to help the youth do an in-depth study on the main and larger theme. The main speakers were Sr. Paulina Etcheverry, FMIC, Br. Manuel Alvarado, OFM, Héctor Fernández Cubillos, and Br. Francisco Salgado, OFM. All of them contributed to the formation of the young participants.

Present on behalf of Ana Fruk, who is both the International Coordinator of YouFra and Councilor of the CIOFS Presidency was Anderson Moura of Brazil, a member of the International Coordination of YouFra for South America. Also present on behalf of Chile’s SFO was Ingrid Palacios, who is also both National Minister and International Councilor of Chile’s SFO. We are grateful to the organizers of this event and the team of the National Presidency of Chile’s YouFra made up of María Paz Díaz Valenzuela and National Assistant Br. Omar Luna, OFM. Thank you also to the OFM Province of the Most Holy Trinity and the Franciscan family of Chile, to Missionszentrale der Franziskaner, and all those who traveled many kilometers (for miles) in order to participate.

The whole event then concluded with a solemn celebration of the Eucharist presided over by Provincial Vicar Br. Jorge Concha, OFM on Jan. 24 in the Church of St. Francis of Alameda, the Mother House of the OFM Province. The announcement that the next and IV South American gathering of YouFra will take place in January of 2012 in Colombia was received with joy.

### **Assisi, Italy – A Course for SFO-YouFra Assistants**

The XI course for the SFO-YouFra Assistants took place in Assisi at the “Barbara Micarelli Spirituality Center” Jan. 25-29, 2010. Assistant General Br. Amanuel Mesgun OFMCap represented CAS for this occasion. The theme discussed were *Rule and Gospel: For a Christian Vocation Lived out in the World* by Br. Massimo Fusarelli, OFM; *The Grace of the Origins as a Penitential Reawakening* by Lino Temperini, TOR; *The Grace of the Origins at the Origin of Vital Reciprocity* by Br. Felice Cangelosi, OFMCap. On the last day of this gathering, the National Assistants held a round table with Fabio Fazio, National President of YouFra and Valentina Giunchedi, Vice-president.

# SFO FRATERNITIES IN THE WORLD

## ESTABLISHED NATIONAL FRATERNITY

An *Established National Fraternity* is considered “the organic union of the local fraternities existing within the territory of one or more states which are joined and coordinated among themselves through regional fraternities, wherever they exist” (see *SFO Const* 65.1). A *National Fraternity* is not the fruit of a canonical establishment on the part of the competent authority of the First Order or TOR – as it is the case with local and personal Fraternities. Rather, it is “formally established by the Presidency of CIOFS according to the norms of the General Constitutions (Art. 65.2) along with the right to a representative in the International Council” (see *FIOFS Statutes* 4.1). This representative can be “the National Minister or an International Councillor elected for this purpose and who is also part of the National Council” (see *FIOFS Statutes* 5.1). Each *National Fraternity* is animated and guided by a Council and a Minister; and has its own seat (see *SFO Const* 65.3). It is organized and operates in conformity with the Constitutions and its own Statutes (see *SFO Const* 65.3). It has a juridical personality in the Church (see *SFO Const* 1.5), and may also have a juridical personality in the civil order (see *SFO Const* 51.2c; 54.1). At the heart of the National Council there can be set up an executive council or board (see *SFO Const* 66.1). The National Fraternities, then, that are established by the CIOFS Presidency are as follows:

1. ANGOLA	34. MALAWI
2. ARGENTINA	35. MALTA
3. AUSTRIA	36. MAURITIUS
4. BELGIUM	37. MEXICO
5. BOLIVIA	38. NICARAGUA
6. BOSNIA AND ERZEGOVINA	39. OCEANIA
7. BRAZIL	40. (PAESI BASSI) NETHERLANDS
8. CANADA	41. PANAMA
9. (CIAD) CHAD	42. PARAGUAY
10. (CILE) CHILE	43. PERU
11. COLOMBIA	44. POLAND
12. (COREA) KOREA	45. PORTUGAL
13. COSTA RICA	46. PORTO RICO
14. CROATIA	47. (REP. CECA) CZECH REPUBLIC
15. CUBA	48. (REP.) CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC
16. DENMARK	49. (REP.) DEMOCRATIC REP. OF THE CONGO
17. ECUADOR	50. (REP.) DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
18. EL SALVADOR	51. (REP.) REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
19. (FILIPPINE) PHILIPPINES	52. ROMANIA
20. FRANCE	53. SLOVAKIA
21. GERMANY	54. SLOVENIA
22. (GIAPPONE) JAPAN	55. SPAIN
23. (GRAN BRETAGNA) UNITED KINGDOM	56. SWEDEN
24. GUATEMALA	57. TANZANIA
25. HONDURAS	58. UKRAINE
26. INDIA	59. (UNGHERIA) HUNGARY
27. INDONESIA	60. URUGUAY
28. IRELAND	61. U.S.A.
29. ITALY	62. VENEZUELA
30. KENYA	63. VIETNAM
31. LEBANON	64. ZAMBIA
32. LITHUANIA	65. ZIMBABWE
33. MADAGASCAR	

## EMERGING NATIONAL FRATERNITIES

An *Emerging National Fraternity* is considered an organic union of all Secular Franciscan Fraternities spread across the same nation, recognized as such by the CIOFS Presidency (see *FIOFS Statutes* 4.2), and which has a Provisional National Council. It must be accompanied by a National Fraternity already established or even directly by the CIOFS Presidency itself in its journey of formation, maturation, and consolidation. The representatives and other members of the *Emerging Fraternities* can participate at the Assemblies, Congresses, and other initiatives of international character. The *Emerging National Fraternities* are the following:

1. ALBANIA	23. MOLDOVA
2. BENIN	24. MOZAMBIQUE
3. BELARUS	25. NAMIBIA
4. BULGARIA	26. NIGERIA
5. BURKINA FASO	27. NORWAY
6. BURUNDI	28. (NUOVA ZELANDA) NEW ZEALAND
7. CAMEROON	29. PAKISTAN
8. (CINA) CHINA	30. PAPUA NEW GUINEA
9. (CIPRO) CYPRUS	31. RUSSIA
10. CONGO	32. RWANDA
11. CÔTE D'IVOIRE	33. SERBIA
12. EGYPT	34. (SIRIA) SYRIA
13. ERITREA	35. SRI LANKA
14. ESTONIA	36. SURINAME
15. ETHIOPIA	37. SWITZERLAND
16. GUINEA-BISSAU	38. TAHITI (FRENCH POLYNESIA)
17. HAITI	39. THAILAND
18. HONG KONG	40. TAIWAN
19. KAZAKHSTAN	41. (TERRA SANTA) HOLY LAND
20. LESOTHO	42. TOGO
21. (LETTONIA) LATVIA	43. UGANDA
22. MALAYSIA-SINGAPORE	

### Countries in the Process of Establishing Their First Local Fraternities

The countries where Secular Franciscans or candidates live as fairly new presences of the SFO are the following:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. ALGERIA</li><li>2. ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA</li><li>3. CAPE VERDE</li><li>4. MYANMAR (EX BURMA)</li></ol> |
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