

ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES RE SPIRITUAL ASSISTANT APPOINTMENTS

And

DIOCESAN COMMUNICATIONS

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on behalf of
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To:NAFRA-SA;NAFRA RM GROUP;+1 other

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

May the Lord give you peace!

I've had some recent, detail-oriented conversations that have led me to write you with some information and suggestions. These would be good to share with local spiritual assistants and local ministers.

1. A fraternity should not say they "have" a spiritual assistant until they receive a letter of appointment for the person to serve. (If you are bonded to my province, send a recommendation or request to ofs.assistant@friars.us ... thanks!)

2. Please check whether the database has the correct person listed as spiritual assistant. Sometimes a former SA is left on because no one told them to remove that person. Or the current person was never entered (more a problem in some regions than in others).

3. If your regional database coordinator is not "on the spot" with changing things, and your fraternity is bonded to my province, then I'm happy to help ensure the database personnel receive the proper documentation. I have started to copy appointments to them (but still please check my very human work!) when I send email copies to everyone else who needs them.

4. A fraternity may not move across diocesan or regional lines without the approval of the friar province bonded to them. They need several other approvals as well, but it is very bad form and embarrassing to us friars when we hear that a fraternity has "moved" across diocesan lines and we didn't file the proper request (which has to come through us friars who are responsible for all the canonical requests).

5. Bishops should be made aware of the apostolates and the life of the Secular Franciscan Order in their dioceses. In some cases, regional ministers are informing the bishops in each diocese, annually, of the fraternities in their diocese, perhaps along with contact information for the minister and spiritual assistant and a summary of the apostolates and other activities of these fraternities. This might be better done with more detail by the local ministers themselves, so that each fraternity develops a relationship with their local bishop and by extension the local church beyond the parish where they meet.

6. Persons in initial formation must be interviewed during that process twice by the spiritual assistant. If there is no spiritual assistant in the fraternity, a regional spiritual assistant or the provincial spiritual assistant (OFS Animator; or otherwise delegate of the relevant friar provincial minister) can arrange for or perform the interview. It is not proper to just reach out to any spiritual assistant appointed to another fraternity, for a host of reasons.

While I serve as a national spiritual assistant, and that experience also informs this message, I'm writing this as a delegate of my provincial minister (OFS Animator/provincial spiritual assistant). I am relying on regional ministers and spiritual assistants to ensure that these messages are distributed to the local level, at least to those bonded to my province, although I think these are guidelines that should be followed by everyone.

Peace.

Fraternally,
Jerome, ofm
OFS Animator, OFM Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe