

Let us serve like Jesus - Let us Journey together

Strengthening the Bond between Secular Franciscans & our “Friar Provinces”

You might ask, “Why are we talking about strengthening the “bond” between Secular Franciscans and our “Friar Provinces”, in the first place? “What are Friar Provinces?” “What do you mean by “bond” and how are we bonded?” Friar Provinces are groupings of Franciscan priests and brothers of either the First or Third Order Regular according to their *Constitutions*. We/our local fraternities are “bonded”/linked/related to one of these Franciscan Provinces prior to our official “establishment” (Church & Franciscan decision that the fraternity and its members have been instructed in developing its members’ vocations and proven their ability to work well together).

As our *Rule* and *General Constitutions* instruct us, these Franciscan priests and brothers must provide our fraternities with their spiritual assistance by keeping us faithful to the teachings of the Catholic Church and faithful to our Franciscan charism. When our local fraternities were in early formation as a fraternity, one of these Provinces agreed to provide this spiritual assistance. They carry out this responsibility by participating in our fraternity gatherings and helping a person to discern whether or not (s)he has a calling to live the Franciscan life in the world. They also have the responsibilities of being ecclesial witnesses at a member’s profession & at a fraternity’s Chapter of Elections and evaluating a fraternity’s spiritual health through a Pastoral Visit every so often. These responsibilities are needed at all levels of fraternity life, not just at the local level. No matter the level of fraternity, these Spiritual Assistants must be officially appointed by their major superior – even though the fraternity council may offer suggestions for this appointment. There are certain conditions which allow a fraternity to transfer from the establishing Province to another Province, e.g. the Province no longer has priests or brothers serving in the fraternity’s area while another Province does have that manpower in the given area.

“How can/should we “strengthen” this relationship, especially if we don’t know the name of the “friar in charge” or what his contact information is?” Communication is the simple answer for deepening relationships and your Regional Executive Council (REC) should be able to help you get this information.

Suggested means of communicating by Local Fraternities:

1. After preparing your Annual Report for the Regional Fraternity, prepare a report for the Provincial Spiritual Assistant (PSA) by picking out the highlights (you might even consider sending a copy to your bishop so he knows about you) – who you are; where you’re located; approximate number of members – number of active/attending & number of those who no longer are able to attend because of age or health; number of aspirants & candidates; whether or not you have a Spiritual Assistant; how your members serve in the diocese and in our Order. Maybe include a photo.
2. Advise that your fraternity members are praying for him & all friars in the Province; also you’re praying for vocations to their Province. Ask that they pray for your fraternity & for vocations to our Order.
3. **Do not** ask him to provide a Spiritual Assistant in your early communications. Give him an opportunity to learn about your fraternity & let him offer one or a suggestion of where you may look for one.
4. Send him a card at Easter, Christmas & his birthday, if you know it, with a brief note.