



Secular Franciscan Order - USA

Guide to
Canonical Establishment
of a Secular Franciscan Fraternity

Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA)
National Executive Council (NEC)

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So You Want to Start a Fraternity...

Welcome! You're about to undertake a great and rewarding task. But before you begin, you should be aware of the significance of what you intend to do.

If you're already a professed Secular Franciscan, the ideas that follow should not be new to you. Consider this a helpful reminder of some basics which might otherwise get lost in the procedural details. It is important to have these basics firmly in mind.

If you are not a Secular Franciscan, much of what is said will probably be unfamiliar. Some of the terms used will be explained as we go along. As for the rest, you're not going to be doing this alone. Don't be afraid to ask other Secular Franciscans for clarification.

To be more specific, the "other Secular Franciscans" who will assist you are:

- the Regional Executive Council (REC), one of whose responsibilities is the oversight of newly forming Secular Franciscan groups in your geographic area, and
- the sponsoring fraternity, a local fraternity which will be assigned to mentor you through the process.

Let's begin by clarifying what a Secular Franciscan fraternity is not.

- It is not a prayer group, although members do pray when they gather.
- It is not a support group, although members do support each other.
- It is not a study group, although formation in the Franciscan way of life is an ongoing part of every gathering.
- It is not a Bible study group, although the Gospels form the basis of OFS life and are frequently discussed.
- It is not a social ministry group, although members participate in a variety of social ministries.
- It is not a parish organization, although most fraternities do meet in parish facilities.

So what is a fraternity, then? ***The local fraternity is the basic unit of the Secular Franciscan Order*** (the OFS). It has ***a special purpose*** which is defined by the OFS legislation, and ***a unique identity*** (called a "juridical personality") ***in the Church***.

Let's unpack these statements.

A Secular Franciscan fraternity is ***part of an established Order in the Church***, which has certain implications.

- The fraternity itself must be ***officially 'established' by one of the Franciscan friar provinces*** that have ecclesiastical responsibility for the OFS. It is thus by definition not a parish or diocesan organization.
- Individual members are ***bound more intimately to the Church***, which is why full membership is open only to Catholics in full communion with the Church.

That describes the fraternity's identity as it relates to the Church. What about its ***purpose***?

- First and foremost, ***the purpose of the Order*** (and thus the purpose of the fraternity, all OFS members, and all those who belong to the Franciscan Family) is to ***make present the Franciscan charism in the life and mission of the Church*** (OFS Rule, Art. 1).
- In and of itself, the fraternity is ***a service to the Church***. "Fidelity to their own charism, Franciscan and secular, and the witness of building fraternity, sincerely and openly, are their principal services to the Church, which is the community of love (OFS General Constitutions (GC) 100.3)."
- "The Fraternity of the OFS finds its origin in the inspiration of Francis of Assisi to whom the Most High revealed the essential gospel quality of life in fraternal communion." (GC 28.1) As an integral part of OFS life, it is marked by fraternal communion and is ***a means of holiness***.

With these considerations firmly in mind, this Guide sets forth a clear pathway to canonical establishment of a new Secular Franciscan fraternity. It describes:

- the stages of development of the group,
- the requirements for documentation,

- when and how to obtain the approval of the local bishop and the Provincial Minister, and
- the respective roles of the sponsoring fraternity and the REC throughout the process.

But establishing a fraternity is more than just the end result of checking off items on a To-Do list. There is another aspect of a fraternity's identity, a spiritual dimension that was hinted at in the description of its purpose. The fraternity is to become **a genuine ecclesial community**. Canonical establishment is **an acknowledgment by the Church that a fraternity, an ecclesial community, is present**.

The requirements for developing a genuine ecclesial community are more difficult to define than listing those for documentation and approval, but they are obviously key here. In some ways, you can think of the process as analogous to the way you'd go about acquiring any new skill: you'd watch someone, you'd try it out, you'd get some coaching, and you'd practice what you learned. So, to assist you, a sponsoring fraternity will be assigned to mentor you, answer your questions, and serve as a model of fraternity life. In addition, we list here some general attitudes that are helpful to keep in mind.

- **Make building community your priority.** A fraternity doesn't just happen automatically, without significant effort on the part of its members. It needs to be worked for to become a reality. Resolve that your commitment to your Secular Franciscan vocation and to the fraternity will take precedence over your involvement in other organizations, including those of the parish.
- **Cultivate a sense of co-responsibility within the fraternity.** Unlike other organizations where responsibility for the well-being of the group is held by a small number, in a fraternity all members share responsibility for the life of the fraternity. "The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer and active collaboration, in accordance with each one's means and possible obligations for the animation of the Fraternity." (GC 30.2)
- **Acknowledge that community takes time to develop.** Look for opportunities to work together, visit together, pray together, study together and have fun together. Don't limit yourselves to the monthly fraternity gathering, but find ways to interact with fellow Franciscans throughout the month.
- **Appreciate differences.** Fraternal unity does not imply uniformity. Our differences add to the richness of life, and bring a wide variety of gifts and talents to the fraternity. They are a positive advantage, and should not be allowed to become the cause of dissension. Which of us can be complete without his brothers and sisters?
- **Beware of being judgmental.** Being judgmental is one of the easiest ways to poison the spirit of the fraternity. "Blessed is the person that puts up with the frailty of his neighbor to the extent he would like his neighbor to put up with him if he were in a similar plight." (Admonition XVIII*)
- **Practice forgiveness.** "...I wish to know in this way if you love the Lord and me, His servant and yours: that there is not any brother in the world who has sinned---however much he could have sinned---who, after he has looked into your eyes, would ever depart without your mercy, if he is looking for mercy. And if he were not looking for mercy, you would ask him if he wants mercy. And if he would sin a thousand times before your eyes, love him more than me so that you may draw him to the Lord..." (Letter to a Minister*). Even in our fraternities, we will have many opportunities to apply this advice.

And finally, and most important

- **Follow St. Francis' advice** to his brothers. "Pursue what you should desire above all else, namely, to have the Spirit of God and God's grace working in you..." (cf. Earlier Rule XVII*). When you come right down to it, all the attitudes and techniques in the world are insufficient to form a genuine ecclesial community. The Holy Spirit is the one who breathes life into your fraternity, who molds you and brings you together as one.

Again, welcome. May you be richly blessed and rewarded as you take up the challenge of forming a new Secular Franciscan fraternity.

*Francis of Assisi, Early Documents, Vol. I, The Saint, New City Press, 1999.

PATHWAY TO CANONICAL ESTABLISHMENT

PERSONS DESIRING TO START A FRATERNITY



Approval of Regional Executive Council (REC)

NEWLY FORMING GROUP (NFG)



Assignment of sponsoring fraternity



Time of formation and building community
(minimum one year with five professed members)



Receipt of written intention of the *altius moderamen* from friar province



Approval of REC

EMERGING FRATERNITY



Fraternity council appointed by REC
Fraternity name chosen and approved
Formal agreement for *altius moderamen* and spiritual assistant



Several years functioning as a fraternity
with continued evaluation of progress



Approval of REC / Provincial Minister or delegate / local Ordinary

ESTABLISHED FRATERNITY

Case Studies for Canonical Establishment

Here are some case studies that illustrate some of the problems that can occur when:

- There is insufficient oversight by the REC.
- The spiritual assistant is either absent or inexperienced.
- The involvement and support of the sponsoring fraternity is inadequate.

The guidelines in this document are based on years of experience, and are meant to prevent the cases described below.

Case Study 1: Initial Formation/Fraternity Life

Connie Cortona had a passion for promoting the Order, so she was delighted when the Regional Minister asked for her help with a newly forming group. None of the group members were professed, but Connie liked a challenge, and she was confident in her skills as a formator. She began to hold initial formation sessions for her small group of inquirers and met faithfully with them over the next two years. When the time came for them to be professed, Connie contacted the Regional Minister, who came and received their professions. But the joy of profession rapidly turned to sorrow when shortly thereafter Connie suffered a fatal heart attack. The Regional Minister returned, appointed a council, and arranged for the establishment of the fraternity. But the little group was lost without Connie. With no real experience of fraternity life beyond formation classes and no contact with neighboring fraternities, they had no idea what they were supposed to do, and the group floundered.

Case Study 2: Fraternity Life/Building Fraternity

St. Francis Fraternity was large and very active, drawing in new members from miles around. But a time came when some of the members who lived in an outlying area wondered whether it might be nicer to have a fraternity nearer their homes, so they wouldn't have to drive so far for meetings. They discussed their plan with the fraternity council, which agreed to support them. The group found a home at St. Hildegard's, a small parish where several of them were members; they settled in and began meeting on their own. Paul Perugia, the fraternity minister, arranged to meet with them annually. They tried to be on their best behavior during Paul's visits, because they really wanted to be canonically established as soon as possible. During his second visit, they asked to be established, and after his third trip to see them, he told the REC that they were ready. So the fraternity became canonically established. But having achieved their goal, the group was at loose ends. They had nothing to work for. They decided to get more involved in parish life and do projects for the pastor. While this pleased the pastor and was convenient for some of the members, those who did not belong to St. Hildegard's felt overlooked and left out. Eventually they drifted away, a couple of members died, and suddenly the group was unable to elect a new council.

Case Study 3: Fraternity Life/Sense of Belonging

St. Angela of Foligno fraternity was growing rapidly, so when some of the members wanted to start a new fraternity a couple of towns away, the council gave them their blessing and sent them off. The council felt that since all the group members had been formed by St. Angela's, they knew everything they needed to know to be an independent fraternity. The group itself was extremely eager for independence and began meeting on their own. The sponsoring fraternity's minister, Priscilla Parma, kept in touch occasionally, and was not offended when the group suggested that they didn't need her help. She recommended that the group be established and found a local pastor who was willing to serve as their spiritual assistant. The REC trusted Priscilla, so they proceeded with the canonical establishment. Once the fraternity was established, the members wanted little to do with other fraternities in the area, and rarely attended Regional gatherings. Soon it seemed that even attending their own meetings had become too much of a burden. They started meeting less frequently, sometimes cancelling their regular gatherings. It should come as no surprise that eventually most members permanently lost interest because they were never sure if there would be a meeting or not.

Case Study 4: Spiritual Assistance

There were no fraternities anywhere in the area when Gail Greccio moved in, so she was delighted when she heard that Vinnie Verona was starting a fraternity. He had already located several other professed OFS members who wanted to participate, and contacted the REC. There had been a slight problem to overcome, because the REC said that they had to have a sponsoring fraternity and a spiritual assistant, and none were nearby. But then, success! Frank Foligno's fraternity was three hours away, but he wanted to be of service so he agreed to meet with them and help them get started. The spiritual assistant from Frank's fraternity would be able to ride along. But Frank was very busy, and after his mother had a stroke and moved in with him, he had little time to devote to the emerging fraternity. Without Frank, the spiritual assistant was unable to travel. The absence of a spiritual assistant did not faze the group, though, as they were determined to be a perfect fraternity and follow all rules to the letter. In fact, they felt that other fraternities they'd heard of were not strict enough. They even had some doubts about the pastor of the parish where they met. Unfortunately, when they offered constructive criticism about how he could improve his liturgies and then wrote to the bishop about it, the pastor was offended and asked them to leave. The bishop, in turn, was not impressed with their knowledge and zeal; he refused to sign their establishment document, and the group disbanded.

Case Study 5: Elections and Voting

A couple of dedicated OFS members, Sally Subiaco and Sharon Spello, felt called to establish a new fraternity in an area of their city which had several Catholic parishes, but no fraternities. Their own fraternity minister and some of the council were angry that the two fraternity stalwarts wanted to leave, so they refused to support the project. At this, a few more of their fraternity brothers and sisters joined Sally and Sharon in protest, and left the fraternity. The little group found another fraternity, St. Angeline's, that was willing to sponsor them. Sally, Sharon and their friends transferred to St. Angeline's and proceeded to recruit several interested individuals into initial formation. Sharon and Sally were grateful to St. Angeline's, so when they were asked to run for office in the sponsoring fraternity, they agreed and were elected to council. Sadly, they did not foresee the potential for conflict of interest and the problems and hurt feelings that would follow. It was not long before Sharon and Sally ran into difficulty with the rest of the council. When making decisions and plans for St. Angeline's, Sharon and Sally found themselves unwilling to support projects that might interfere with their work with the newly forming group. When the time came for St. Angeline's council to evaluate the progress of the new group, Sally and Sharon's ability to be objective was swayed by their hopes for the group, and they were offended when the other council members did not share their views.

Case Study 6: Record Keeping and Reporting

Lynn LaVerna had always wanted to help establish a new fraternity, so when her local fraternity was asked to sponsor a new fraternity, she was the first to volunteer. Lynn was hard-working and eminently trustworthy, but she did have one fault---she liked things done her way. One of those ways was she liked to keep things organized, and she felt that no one could do it better than she did. She insisted on keeping all of the group's records in her home, right where she could lay hands on them. She saw no need to keep the REC informed of all those details. This seemed to work quite well until she died unexpectedly, and her grieving family threw out all those old papers that they were sure no one needed.

Process for Establishing a New Fraternity

Please Note: What follows is a guide to establishing a new OFS Fraternity which covers much of the "how and who" that is not specified in our legislation (our Rule, the OFS General Constitutions (GC), the National Statutes and the CIOFS Spiritual Assistant Statutes). There are many aspects of the establishment process that have been learned over time to be effective in ensuring a successful outcome. It is highly recommended that you follow these guidelines. Different options for accomplishing a given step or objective should be carefully discerned.

There are three phases of establishing a new fraternity, each with its own tasks, roles, responsibilities and pre-conditions.

- Phase I – Newly Forming Group
- Phase II – Emerging Fraternity
- Phase III – Canonical Establishment

For each phase, frequent documentation and thorough record-keeping are essential, particularly since the establishment process can span multiple terms of office in both the sponsoring fraternity and the REC.

Note that although a sponsoring fraternity will be assigned to work directly with the newly forming group/emerging fraternity, the REC is ultimately responsible for overseeing the progress of the new group, and its relationship with the sponsoring fraternity.

Phase I: Newly Forming Group

Anyone who wishes to start a new Secular Franciscan (OFS) fraternity must submit a request to the REC of their area, preferably in writing, whether the initial idea comes from professed Secular Franciscans, other lay persons, friars or religious. After serious dialogue with the requesting group, the REC gives or withholds its approval.¹ If approval is given, the steps to be taken are detailed as follows:

First Steps for the Newly Forming Group

- The REC assigns the newly forming group to a sponsoring fraternity council.
- In the newly forming group, there may be professed individuals who belong to a fraternity other than the assigned sponsoring fraternity. Typically, these Seculars would be expected to transfer to the sponsoring fraternity.² See National Transfer Form on the OFS National Website under Resource/Guidelines, Forms & Other Resources.
- The newly forming group selects a member of their group to be the group leader, with the assistance of the sponsoring fraternity council.

¹ If the REC withholds permission to start a newly forming group, the reasons for the decision are communicated to those who made the request.

² Any exceptions need to be approved by the REC.

Requirements for starting a newly forming group

- ✓ A group of at least five people (preferably closer to ten) who may or may not be professed OFS members, who seek to form a new canonically established OFS fraternity.
- ✓ Request from the group to the REC for newly forming group status and sponsorship.
- ✓ Approval of the newly forming group by the REC, and acceptance of sponsorship by the sponsoring fraternity.

Required number of members to start a newly forming group.

Though five members are required in order to provide a fraternity council (GC Article 46.2), prudence would dictate that more than five members are needed to ensure long-term viability.

Considerations for sponsorship

For a discussion of sponsorship see section "Extraordinary Circumstances for Sponsorship," p. 20.

- The newly forming group selects a qualified professed member from its number (if available) as facilitator of formation, with the collaboration of the formation team of the sponsoring fraternity. If none of the members in the newly forming group qualify to assume this responsibility, the sponsoring fraternity will provide a suitable person. In either case, the formation of new members in the newly forming group will be supported by the formation team of the sponsoring fraternity.
- The newly forming group should consider that becoming an emerging fraternity or being canonically established requires the specification of an ecclesial location, (parish church, friary, convent, shrine, etc.).

Fraternity Life of a Newly Forming Group

Fraternity Gatherings and Council Meetings

Members of the newly forming group meet regularly in person in order to bond as a fraternity.

Members of the newly forming group are encouraged to attend the sponsoring fraternity's gatherings. The newly forming group leader, or a delegate, may attend the sponsoring fraternity's council meetings as an observer. In addition, where possible, a member of the sponsoring fraternity council should attend the newly forming group gatherings. At any time, an REC member may informally visit the newly forming group.

If distance prevents routine in-person attendance, teleconferencing is an option. However, at least twice a year, representatives from the sponsoring fraternity should meet physically with the newly forming group.

Members of the newly forming group are expected to attend Regional meetings, retreats and workshops when possible. It is important that newly forming group members have an experience of fraternity at the local and Regional level as well as their own gatherings.

Spiritual Assistance

In the initial stages of the newly forming group, before they obtain an acceptance of the *altius moderamen* from a friar province, the spiritual assistant of the sponsoring fraternity serves as the spiritual assistant for the newly forming group. If a spiritual assistant is not available, the sponsoring fraternity should confer with the REC (Case Study 4, p. 5 and sidebar p. 8).

Formation

Initial Formation: Members of the newly forming group start or continue their initial formation under the guidance of the sponsoring fraternity's formation team. Time frames for each stage of initial formation are as specified in the National Statutes, Article 19.1-2.

The sponsoring fraternity's council should be in regular contact with whoever is conducting the initial formation sessions for the newly forming group. The progress of those in initial formation should be regularly reviewed by the sponsoring fraternity's council. Initial formation sessions should be in person whenever possible, but appropriate virtual sessions can be used, with the approval of the REC, to complement the in-person sessions (Case Study 1, p. 4).

The Rites of Welcoming, Admission and Profession are carried out by the sponsoring fraternity.

Period of Building Community

The newly forming group begins a period of building community. The group holds regular gatherings that include the necessary elements of a fraternity gathering: prayer, formation, announcements, and socializing. During this period of community building, the members of the newly forming group are encouraged to attend sponsoring fraternity gatherings. They should seek opportunities for interaction with each other outside their regular gatherings. They should join with other Franciscans for retreats, fraternity celebrations, apostolates, etc. (Case Study 2, p. 4.)

The sponsoring fraternity monitors the newly forming group's structures and activities in order to provide support.



Ongoing Formation: If distance prevents the newly forming group members from participating in ongoing formation with the sponsoring fraternity, there are two options:

- The sponsoring fraternity, in collaboration with the person responsible for formation in the newly forming group, provides an ongoing formation program. When the sponsoring fraternity member cannot be present at the newly forming group gatherings, the person responsible for formation in the newly forming group is prepared ahead of time by the sponsoring fraternity to present the material and lead the discussion.
- If there are professed members in the newly forming group, the newly forming group proposes an ongoing formation program to the Formation Director of the sponsoring fraternity for review.

Elections and Voting

Once they transfer into the sponsoring fraternity, professed members of the newly forming group have voting rights in the elections of the sponsoring fraternity, which include passive and active voice. Although they do have passive voice (that is, can be elected to council), we strongly recommend that professed members of the newly forming group not serve on the sponsoring fraternity council, since this can lead to serious conflicts of interest (Case Study 5, p. 5).

The newly forming group itself does not have voting rights in Regional Fraternity elections. Members of the newly forming group are represented by the sponsoring fraternity.

Record Keeping and Reporting

Sponsoring Fraternity's Responsibilities

Minutes of the sponsoring fraternity council meetings will include a report of the activities of the newly forming group(s) which they sponsor.

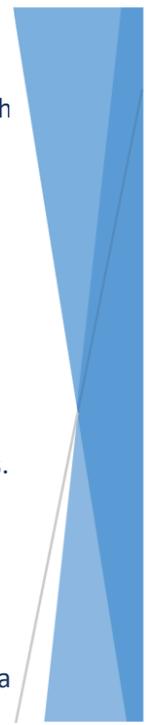
The sponsoring fraternity sets up a file containing the required documentation for each person in initial formation in the newly forming group.

Admissions and professions, as well as any changes in member status, will be recorded in the sponsoring fraternity's register (sidebar p. 9).

The sponsoring fraternity will include the demographics and additional information for the newly forming group in their Annual Report to the Region (Case Study 6, p. 5). Candidates and newly professed members of the newly forming group are listed in the National Database as members of the sponsoring fraternity.

What is the *Altius Moderamen*?

The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS has been entrusted by the Church to the Friars of the Franciscan First Order and the Third Order Regular (TOR). *Altius moderamen* refers to the statement in the Code of Canon Law (#303) which gives the "higher direction" in matters of spirituality and pastoral care to the OFM, OFM Capuchin, OFM Conventual and TOR Friars. They carry out this responsibility through their Provinces. The Provincial Ministers (either personally or through their friar delegate) establish local fraternities and appoint local and Regional Spiritual Assistants. Each canonically established fraternity is "bonded" to a friar province.



Newly Forming Group's Responsibilities

The newly forming group keeps attendance records and minutes of their gatherings.

The newly forming group collects the required documentation for their members in initial formation and submits it to the sponsoring fraternity.

The newly forming group is responsible for providing written reports to the sponsoring fraternity council twice a year. The newly forming group will keep a roster of their members and provide it to the sponsoring fraternity as part of their reporting.

Finances/Fair Share

The newly forming group keeps records of its members' contributions to the common fund. These contributions cover expenses incurred as part of fraternity life, and their Fair Share³ contribution, which the sponsoring fraternity remits to the REC on their behalf.

The donations from the newly forming group members should not be commingled with any individual member's bank account, and a separate account should not be set up under any individual's social security number. The newly forming group may open its own bank account using the EIN (employer identification number) of the sponsoring fraternity. However, to avoid banking confusion, this account should be opened at a separate bank.⁴

Obtaining the Written Intention for the *Altius Moderamen*

When the sponsoring fraternity and the REC feel that the newly forming group is likely to prove viable, the REC seeks the statement of intention from a friar province of assuming the *altius moderamen* for the newly forming group.

Typically, the friar province to which the sponsoring fraternity is bonded would be the one approached for the newly forming group. However, if location or other considerations dictate, another friar province can be selected.

³ *Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils. Rule Art. 25*

⁴ Only a canonically established OFS Fraternity should apply for an employer identification number. See detailed instructions on the National Website (secularfranciscansusa.org). Search on "Obtaining an EIN".

Fraternity Register versus Roster

Each local fraternity is to have at least a register of enrollments (admissions, professions, transfers, deaths, and every other important annotation relative to the individual members) (GC, Article 52.2.b, footnote 35).

The **Fraternity Register** is the official record of OFS members. Each canonically established fraternity must have a register which includes member name, birth date, and dates of welcoming, admission, profession and death as well as changes in status or transfers.

Members are not entered in the Register until they are admitted to candidacy.

Until a newly forming group or emerging fraternity is canonically established, its candidates and newly professed members will be recorded in the sponsoring fraternity's Register.

A newly forming group, however, maintains a **roster** of their members. The roster would include names, addresses and contact information, and status (Orientation, Inquiry, Candidacy, Professed, etc.). The roster is included in its regular report to the sponsoring fraternity.

Phase II: Emerging Fraternity

The newly forming group begins its preparation for becoming an “emerging fraternity” only after it has a minimum of five (5) professed members and has received the written intention of the *altius moderamen*.

Steps in Preparation for Emerging Fraternity Status

- The newly forming group completes at least one year with five professed members.
- The sponsoring fraternity council works with the newly forming group to jointly evaluate their readiness to request emerging fraternity status.
- If the evaluation indicates readiness, the newly forming group requests a pastoral and fraternal visitation from the REC to assess the group’s suitability for the status of an “emerging fraternity”.
- The REC completes pastoral and fraternal visitations and makes recommendations as necessary.
- The newly forming group submits a written request to the REC for emerging fraternity status.

Steps in Setting up the Emerging Fraternity

- The emerging fraternity submits to the REC their recommendation of members to serve on their first fraternity council. Once approved by the REC, this council will serve the emerging fraternity until their first election is held after the Canonical Establishment. If changes to the council become necessary, they require the approval of the REC.
- The emerging fraternity selects a name for the new fraternity and submits it to the REC for approval.
- The REC notifies the National Executive Council (NEC) and the CNSA of the existence of the new emerging fraternity, its name, where it meets and who will be the contact persons.
- The sponsoring fraternity, on behalf of the new emerging fraternity, provides the necessary information to the National Database administrator to set up the record for the new emerging fraternity.
- The National Database administrator sets up a fraternity record for the emerging fraternity, gives it a number that is an extension of that of the sponsoring fraternity, and the members are now listed as part of the emerging fraternity. Since the members of the emerging fraternity are still under the sponsoring fraternity, no transfers are required.
- The REC notifies the friar province to which the emerging fraternity will be bonded that the emerging fraternity is now in existence.
- The newly appointed council of the emerging fraternity enters into a formal written agreement with the friar province for the *altius moderamen* and the appointment of the spiritual assistant. (The intention for this was sought by the REC during the newly forming group phase, but the formal agreement is now requested directly by the council of the emerging fraternity.)
- The Provincial Minister (or delegate) informs the local bishop about the existence of an emerging fraternity in his (arch) diocese.

Fraternity Life of an Emerging Fraternity

Fraternity & Council Gatherings

For the next three years (at a minimum⁵), both the emerging fraternity and the sponsoring fraternity share responsibility for development of the new fraternity. While remaining attached to the sponsoring fraternity, the emerging fraternity functions on its own, mentored by the sponsoring fraternity as needed. It has regular council and fraternity gatherings, which may be attended by members of the sponsoring fraternity. At any time, a member of the REC may informally visit the emerging fraternity, or attend their council gathering as an observer.

The appointed minister of the emerging fraternity, or their delegate, may attend the sponsoring fraternity council meetings as an observer.

If distance prevents routine in-person attendance, teleconferencing is an option. However, at least twice a year, representatives from the sponsoring fraternity should meet physically with the emerging fraternity.

The emerging fraternity is expected to continue to take part in Regional gatherings as well as interacting with other fraternities in the Region.

Spiritual Assistance

The emerging fraternity has its own spiritual assistant, assigned by the Province to which the fraternity is bonded.

Formation

Initial Formation. The emerging fraternity assumes the responsibility for initial formation of its inquirers and candidates, with guidance from the sponsoring fraternity. The emerging fraternity council evaluates the candidates for admission and profession, and, after careful discernment, makes a recommendation to the sponsoring fraternity's council. If the recommendation is approved, the minister of the sponsoring fraternity (or his/her delegate) presides at the Rite of Admission or receives the profession of the candidates. Records of admission and profession will continue to be recorded in the sponsoring fraternity's register.

Building Fraternity and a Sense of Belonging

The emerging fraternity holds regular gatherings that include prayer, formation, communications, and socializing. The members of the emerging fraternity are encouraged to attend sponsoring fraternity gatherings. They should seek opportunities for interaction with each other outside their fraternity gatherings. They should join with other Franciscans for retreats, fraternity celebrations, apostolates, etc. (Case Study 3, p. 4).

Building a Formation Team should be a goal during this time. The emerging fraternity should take advantage of opportunities for "forming the formators," including collaborative formation sessions with other fraternities, and formation workshops.

Discerning Suitability of Individuals for Admission and Profession

An important responsibility of a fraternity council is discernment of the suitability of aspiring members for admission and profession.

For an emerging fraternity, and in fact, for any fraternity, maintaining a membership that allows for a vibrant fraternity life, as well as an adequate number of professed members to ensure long-term leadership, is a high priority. However, the council must guard against recommending the admission and profession of individuals for the sake of increasing membership, or fear of hurt feelings. Admitting and professing individuals who may not have a vocation can have serious implications for the health of the fraternity long term. Careful discernment is key.

⁵ The three year period as an emerging fraternity is a minimum requirement. However, most fraternities need a longer preparation period before canonical establishment.

Ongoing Formation. The emerging fraternity prepares and conducts its own ongoing formation at each gathering.

Elections and Voting

The newly forming group itself does not hold elections as its council is appointed. Professed members of the emerging fraternity continue to have voting rights in the elections of the sponsoring fraternity (see Elections and Voting, p. 8).⁶

Record Keeping and Reporting

Sponsoring Fraternity's Responsibilities

The demographics and activities of the emerging fraternity, and payment of Fair Share for its members and candidates, are included in the sponsoring fraternity's Annual Report to the REC.

Records of admission and profession will continue to be recorded in the sponsoring fraternity's register. The sponsoring fraternity maintains the emerging fraternity's records in the National Database, including admissions, professions, and any other member updates.

The sponsoring fraternity relinquishes custody of the emerging fraternity's members' files to the emerging fraternity. (Membership files consist of necessary documentation, initial formation records, correspondence, etc.)

Emerging Fraternity's Responsibilities

The emerging fraternity will keep minutes of their council and fraternity meetings.

The emerging fraternity will assume the custody of its own membership files from the sponsoring fraternity, as well as maintaining the roster for their members.

The emerging fraternity will prepare an Annual Report, which they will submit to the sponsoring fraternity. In addition the emerging fraternity will be responsible for providing written reports to the sponsoring fraternity council twice a year.

Finances/Fair Share

The emerging fraternity keeps its own records of contributions from the members and remits the amount of Fair Share for each professed member and candidate, as set by the Region, to the sponsoring fraternity.

Servant Leadership Training

The sponsoring fraternity council arranges for servant leadership training, and mentors the emerging fraternity's council, preparing the fraternity for canonical establishment. Special attention is given to forming leaders who are able to animate and guide the fraternity in a Franciscan way. Good formation practices, record keeping, reporting, Fair Share, and National Database procedures are also important.



⁶ Those professed members who have not transferred from their fraternity of origin, retain voting rights in their fraternity of origin. If distance prevents them from attending the elective chapter, they may be deemed "excused" and not counted toward the quorum.

Phase III: Canonically Establishing a Fraternity

When the fraternity has completed at least three years functioning as an emerging fraternity, it can begin the process for requesting canonical establishment.

Preparation for Canonical Establishment

- The sponsoring fraternity council and the emerging fraternity's council together evaluate the emerging fraternity, using the *Readiness for Canonical Establishment* document (p. 21).
- If the evaluation is positive, the emerging fraternity requests a pastoral and fraternal visitation from the REC.
- If the visitations are completed with favorable reports, the emerging fraternity council submits a formal written request to the REC to be canonically established.
- The REC votes on the request. They inform both the emerging fraternity and the sponsoring fraternity of the outcome of their decision. If the vote is affirmative, the REC informs the Provincial Minister (or his delegate) of its approval of the canonical establishment.
- The Provincial Minister (or delegate) requests the bishop's permission to establish the new fraternity in his diocese.
- An official register is procured for the new fraternity.
- The REC contacts the CNSA executive secretary to request the formal document of establishment, providing the necessary information (p. 22).
- The CNSA executive secretary sends five original establishment documents to the Regional Minister.
- The Regional minister signs and dates the five documents and passes them on to the Provincial Minister (or delegate).
- The Provincial Minister (or delegate) signs and dates the five documents and obtains the signature of the bishop. All five documents are then brought to the canonical establishment ceremony.
- The emerging fraternity plans the ceremony of canonical establishment in collaboration with the REC, the Provincial Minister (or delegate), and, where customary, the bishop, and sets the date.
- The REC and the fraternity set a date for the council elections. The election should be held as soon after the canonical establishment as possible, and no later than one year after canonical establishment. The appointed council of the emerging fraternity serves until the election can be held.

Canonical Establishment of a Fraternity

The canonical erection of the local Fraternity belongs to the competent religious Major Superior at the request of the brothers and sisters concerned and with the prior consultation and collaboration of the council of the higher level to which the new Fraternity will be affiliated according to the National Statutes.

The written consent of the local Ordinary is necessary for the canonical erection of a Fraternity outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the First Order or the TOR. (GC Article 46.1)

Canonical Establishment Ceremony

The ceremony of canonical establishment is celebrated with due solemnity according to the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*. During the ceremony, the documents are signed and dated by the minister provincial (or his delegate), and by the witnesses.

After the ceremony:

- The first document of canonical establishment is sent to the REC to be kept in its archives, the second is sent to the archives of the friar province, a third is sent to the diocesan chancery for filing, the fourth is preserved in the newly established fraternity's records, and the fifth is sent to the national secretary for the national archives.
- The Regional Minister informs the NEC and the National Database administrator of the canonical establishment of the new fraternity.
- The National Database administrator assigns a fraternity number to the newly established fraternity and sets up the new fraternity record in the database.
- The new fraternity enters the records for their members in their own fraternity register as having transferred in from the sponsoring fraternity. The sponsoring fraternity notes in their register that the members of the newly established fraternity have been transferred to the new fraternity. Transfer forms are not necessary, but the members should be noted as having been transferred in the register.

After Canonical Establishment

The elections for the newly canonically established fraternity should take place as soon as possible, but within one year after the establishment.

The newly established fraternity council:

- approves and accepts new inquirers and candidates, and professes new members,
- maintains the National Database for its members,
- has voting rights in the Regional Fraternity, and
- submits the Annual Report and Fair Share contribution directly to the REC.

OFS General Constitutions, Article 46.2

For the valid establishment of a local Fraternity, at least five perpetually professed members are required. The admission and profession of these first brothers and sisters will be received by the Council of another local Fraternity or by the Council of a higher level which will have provided for their formation in appropriate ways. The acts of admission and Profession and the Decree of Erection are preserved in the records of the Fraternity. Copies are sent to the Council of the higher level.



Responsibilities of the Regional Executive Council

The list below focuses specifically on the responsibilities of the REC regarding a new group and its sponsoring fraternity.

1. The REC considering the establishment of a new fraternity should review the entire section of this document entitled “Process for Establishing a New Fraternity”.
2. When the REC receives a request to approve the start of a newly forming group, it carefully considers the request, entering into a dialogue with the requesting group. Careful consideration includes taking into account possible questionable motives for the forming of a new group, such as underlying difficulty with an existing group.
3. Sometimes the request may take the form of a petition to reactivate a deactivated fraternity. The REC should consider the following. If at least one of the members seeking to reactivate a fraternity belonged to the original fraternity, and the fraternity would be meeting in the same location, and the friar province to which it was bonded remains the same, there would seem to be good reason to prefer reactivation over establishing a new fraternity. If these three conditions are not met, the REC should direct the group to establish a new fraternity.
4. The REC takes a formal vote on the request:
 - a. If the request is denied, a written letter explaining the reasons is sent to the requestors.
 - b. If the request is approved, the REC informs the group and proceeds as follows:
5. The REC considers possible sponsors for the group and consults with the requestors on these possibilities.
6. The REC reviews the responsibilities of a sponsoring fraternity with the prospective fraternity council(s), and upon agreement, names the sponsoring fraternity for the newly forming group (p. 6).
7. The REC may decide to appoint a liaison to work with the sponsoring fraternity and the newly forming group to ensure that the resources needed for both the sponsoring fraternity and the newly forming group are available, and to assist with any questions or issues.
8. Members of the REC are expected to visit the newly forming group on occasion to reinforce a sense of belonging to a larger order and to show support.
9. If the sponsoring fraternity is unable to provide a spiritual assistant for the newly forming group (prior to the appointment of one by the friar province), the REC will ensure that the newly forming group has the support of a spiritual assistant until such time as one is assigned by a friar province.
10. Once the newly forming group is deemed stable and viable, the REC initiates the process of obtaining a written intention of the *altius moderamen* from a 1st Order/TOR province.
11. As part of the Fraternal Visitation to a sponsoring fraternity, the REC will ensure that the newly forming group members are represented in the sponsoring fraternity’s register, that transfers have been completed if necessary, and that the Annual Report from the sponsoring fraternity includes the activities and demographics of the newly forming group.

Important Note:

The REC is *ultimately responsible* for overseeing the progress of the new group and its relationship with the sponsoring fraternity.

A procedure should be set in place to ensure that the REC receives periodic reporting from both parties in order to evaluate progress, and give guidance as needed. Evidence of continued progress is required. In case of prolonged lack of progress, the REC should re-examine the viability of the group.



12. As part of the Pastoral Visitation to a sponsoring fraternity, the Regional Spiritual Assistant will ensure that the initial and ongoing formation of the members of the newly forming group conforms to the national and Regional norms.
13. When the time comes to evaluate the newly forming group's readiness to move into emerging fraternity status the REC conducts a pastoral and fraternal visitation. The visitors ensure that all that the requirements for becoming an emerging fraternity have been met (p. 10).
14. The REC provides written reports of the visitations to the newly forming group and the sponsoring fraternity.
 - a. If the visitation reports are favorable the newly forming group requests the status of emerging fraternity from the REC, and the REC votes to approve the request.
 - b. If the visitation reports are not favorable, the REC works with the newly forming group and the sponsoring fraternity to remedy any issues.
15. The REC evaluates and votes on the recommended appointed council for the emerging fraternity, which will serve the emerging fraternity until their first election after Canonical Establishment. The REC also evaluates and votes on any changes to the council required during this time (p. 10).
16. The REC notifies the NEC of the existence of the new emerging fraternity, its name, where it meets, and who will be the contact person.
17. The REC notifies the friar province to which the emerging fraternity will be bonded that the emerging fraternity is now in existence.
18. Once the sponsoring fraternity and the emerging fraternity discern that the emerging fraternity is ready for canonical establishment, the emerging fraternity requests a fraternal and pastoral visitation from the REC. The REC conducts the visitations and provides written reports (p. 13).
19. If the reports are favorable, the emerging fraternity submits a written request for canonical establishment to the REC. If it is approved, the REC informs the Provincial Minister (or his delegate) in writing that the emerging fraternity is ready to be established. If unfavorable, the REC works with the emerging fraternity and the sponsoring fraternity to correct any issues.
20. The REC contacts the CNSA executive secretary and provides the necessary information (p. 22). Once the documents are received, the REC signs them and routes them for additional signatures (p. 13).
21. The Regional Minister, or delegate from the REC, attends the canonical establishment ceremony.
22. The REC and the council of the newly established fraternity set a date for the council elections. The first election for the new fraternity is held as soon as possible, and no later than one year after canonical establishment.

Responsibilities of a Sponsoring Fraternity

Sponsoring a new group is a serious commitment that requires a substantial amount of time. Those fraternities considering sponsorship of a new group should review carefully the responsibilities listed below before committing to sponsor a new group. This list also serves as a checklist to refer to during sponsorship.

Important Note: Given that the establishment process can span multiple terms of office in both the sponsoring fraternity and the Regional Executive Council (REC), frequent documentation and thorough record-keeping are essential at all levels.

Sponsorship of a Newly Forming Group

1. The sponsoring fraternity, once it accepts the role of sponsorship from the REC, opens a dialogue with the members of the newly forming group.
2. If professed members of the newly forming group are from fraternities other than the sponsoring fraternity, the sponsoring fraternity council typically obtains transfers for them and records the information in the sponsoring fraternity's register.
3. The sponsoring fraternity council guides the newly forming group in selecting a leader for the group, and sets expectations regarding gatherings, initial and ongoing formation, reporting, and Fair Share contributions.
4. The sponsoring fraternity discerns a qualified professed member of the newly forming group who will serve as facilitator of formation. If none of the members in the newly forming group qualify to assume this responsibility, the sponsoring fraternity provides a suitable person. In either case, the formation of new members in the newly forming group will be guided by the council or the formation team of the sponsoring fraternity.
5. When possible, a member of the sponsoring fraternity council attends the gatherings of the newly forming group.

To the Sponsoring Fraternity

The importance of these aspects of sponsorship cannot be emphasized enough.

- **Frequent contact** and getting to know the members of the newly forming group. Remember, you will be making important decisions that will affect their future.
- **Documentation** --- in the form of council meeting minutes, letters, and reports --- to keep all parties on track.
- **Updates to the REC.** The REC and Regional Spiritual Assistant(s) oversee the process and make the final decision on 'readiness.' Make their job easier by keeping them up to date.
- And most important of all, **careful discernment** regarding the following:
 - The **presence of a vocation** in those in initial formation.
 - **Finding a balance** between being too directive or doing everything for the newly forming group and letting them flounder. This balance will necessarily change as the newly forming group progresses toward emerging fraternity status and establishment.
 - **Warning signs** that all is not well with the group. In particular, note a lack of interest in contact with other fraternities and attending regional gatherings, a sense of isolation, a strong attitude of independence regarding the rest of the Order, an unwillingness to accept advice or counsel, a sense that the new group views itself as 'better than' other fraternities.
 - And finally, **your own tendency** to want to form the new group in your own image.

6. On an ongoing basis, the sponsoring fraternity council:
 - a. builds fraternity with the members of the newly forming group, and welcomes them to the sponsoring fraternity's gatherings, Regional meetings, retreats and workshops;
 - b. schedules an in-person meeting between members of the sponsoring fraternity council and the members of the newly forming group at least twice a year;
 - c. collaborates in the initial and ongoing formation of the members of the newly forming group, and ensures that all formation sessions are conducted according to national and Regional norms;
 - d. ensures that the sponsoring fraternity's Formation Director is in regular contact with those conducting formation sessions for the newly forming group;
 - e. maintains the membership files for those in initial formation and the newly professed in the newly forming group;
 - f. arranges for regular review of progress of those in initial formation;
 - g. together with the professed members of the newly forming group, dialogues with those progressing through the initial stages of formation, arranges for interviews, and after careful discernment, votes on their acceptance;
 - h. conducts the Rites of Welcoming, Admission and Profession, records these events in the register of the sponsoring fraternity, and updates the National Database;
 - i. receives and reviews regular reports from the newly forming group (semi-annually), records any changes in membership in the sponsoring fraternity's register, updates the National Database as needed and continually evaluates the viability and vibrancy of the group (sidebar, p. 15);
 - j. assists with questions and addresses issues;
 - k. reviews the minutes of the newly forming group, includes a report of the activities and demographics of the newly forming group in their council meeting minutes and in their Annual Report to the REC, and submits Fair Share on behalf of the newly forming group.
7. The newly forming group may set up their own bank account, with the assistance of the sponsoring fraternity, following the guidelines on p. 9.
8. Once the newly forming group has functioned successfully for at least one year with five professed members, the sponsoring fraternity council works with the newly forming group to jointly evaluate their readiness to request emerging fraternity status.
9. If the evaluation of the newly forming group indicates readiness, they request a pastoral and fraternal visitation from the Regional level to assess the group's suitability for the status of an "emerging fraternity."
10. Once favorable visitation reports are received from the REC, the members of the newly forming group choose a name and recommend members to serve as an appointed council for the emerging fraternity. These recommendations are sent to the REC for their approval.
11. The sponsoring fraternity provides the necessary information to the National Database administrator to set up the record for the emerging fraternity.

Sponsorship of the Emerging Fraternity

12. Both the emerging fraternity and the sponsoring fraternity share responsibility for development of the new fraternity. The sponsoring fraternity continues their support as detailed in #6 above, however membership files are now maintained by the emerging fraternity.

13. The emerging fraternity takes responsibility for both initial and ongoing formation with oversight by the sponsoring fraternity council.
14. The sponsoring fraternity council arranges for servant leadership training, and mentors the emerging fraternity's council, preparing the fraternity for canonical establishment. Special attention is given to forming leaders who are able to animate and guide a fraternity in a Franciscan Way. Good formation practices, record keeping, reporting, Fair Share, and National Database procedures are also important.
15. In preparation for requesting canonical establishment, the sponsoring fraternity council and the emerging fraternity's council together evaluate the emerging fraternity, using the *Readiness for Canonical Establishment* document (p. 21).

Extraordinary Circumstances for Sponsorship

Is it ever appropriate for the REC to take on the responsibilities of sponsoring a newly forming group or emerging fraternity? Certainly the REC has the knowledge of how a local fraternity should function, but there are certain complications that arise when the REC assumes this responsibility. Local fraternities, as the basic unit of the Order, are well-suited to take on the responsibilities of sponsorship. Every effort should be made to encourage a local fraternity to take on this role.

Co-Sponsorship

If there is hesitation on the part of a local fraternity to take on the task of sponsoring a newly forming group /emerging fraternity, the REC might suggest “co-sponsorship.” In co-sponsorship, members of the REC participate to some extent in the duties of sponsoring, while mentoring and assisting the local fraternity to participate to the extent possible for their members. Working in partnership has wonderful advantages and presents fewer complications. If co-sponsorship is agreed upon, the REC and the local fraternity council work together to develop a plan that will fulfill all the responsibilities of sponsorship, as well as the responsibilities of the REC, detailed in the previous sections.

The REC as the Sponsoring Fraternity

Only in extraordinary circumstances should the REC take on the sole responsibility of sponsorship. The following section outlines the adaptations that must be made when the REC assumes the role of the sponsoring fraternity.

Specific Adaptations when the REC is the Sponsoring Fraternity

Initial Steps

The REC carefully reviews this document, noting that **they must carry out both the responsibilities proper to the REC as well as the responsibilities of a sponsoring fraternity**, detailed above.

The REC designates one (or more) REC member(s) to be the liaison(s) to the group.

Previously Professed Members

Professed members who choose to join the newly forming group or emerging fraternity may remain in their fraternity of origin until the emerging fraternity is canonically established. These professed members should still contribute financially and exercise voting rights in their fraternity of origin, which continues to include them in their reporting and fair share calculation for their Region. The REC may also choose to establish a record in the National Database for the Newly Forming Group and/or the Emerging Fraternity for record keeping purposes. If the REC establishes such records, the professed members of the NFG or Emerging Fraternity may “transfer” to the new group, in which case they would not have active or passive voice in the elections of their fraternity of origin.

Formation

The REC assigns an appropriate, qualified professed OFS member to oversee formation of the members of the group. The REC carries out the Rites of Welcoming, Admission and Profession (see *Record Keeping* below). The Regional Minister accepts the profession of new members. Candidates may be received during the Rite of Admission by the Regional Minister or another elected member of the REC. The Rite of Welcoming can be led by the leader or other professed member of the newly forming group or emerging fraternity.

Record Keeping

The newly forming group keeps a roster of their members and updates the REC on a regular basis. See “Previously Professed Members” above. The REC begins a Register for the new group.

Readiness for Canonical Establishment – Fraternity Self-Evaluation

- Do the fraternity members show the Franciscan spirit of peace and joy in their hearts, minds, thoughts and actions? Do the members animate and guide one another in the spirit of Jesus and Francis? In what ways?
- How does the fraternity integrate and make use of the Rule, Constitutions and Statutes? Are members knowledgeable with respect to the details for the structure and functioning of the Order?
- Is there an appropriate balance in the fraternity meetings and activities (i.e., formation, prayer, social time, outreach activities), or is one aspect emphasized to the exclusion of all else? In all of these areas, has there been demonstrable growth over time?
- Does the fraternity take responsibility for its own ongoing formation? Is a formation team in place, and do they meet to discuss both initial and ongoing formation? Who leads initial and ongoing formation? What formation resources are used? Does the program seem to be effective?
- Does the fraternity maintain records? Are minutes in order? Is there evidence that required reports are submitted in a timely fashion? Are the fraternity Register and National Database up to date? Are there adequate records for those in initial formation?
- Does the fraternity take responsibility for its own finances? Is there a budget? Do they have their own bank account? How is Fair Share handled? How are overall finances handled?
- Does the fraternity as a whole seem able to function independently?
- Are there signs of sustainability and potential for growth in the fraternity? Are there people at various stages of initial formation?
- Is the council working well together? Can the council members set goals and a direction for the group, beyond just getting established?
- Does the Spiritual Assistant journey with the fraternity? What is the fraternity/Spiritual Assistant relationship? Does the fraternity council seek assistance from the Spiritual Assistant?
- Do the members have a sense of connection to and participation in the larger Order (Regional and National Fraternities)? Is the fraternity represented at the annual Regional Chapter and other Regional gatherings? How does the fraternity implement OFS-USA Commissions, Committees, and priorities of our Order?

Document of Canonical Establishment

Information Needed for Preparing the Document of Canonical Establishment

When an emerging fraternity is ready for canonical establishment, the REC provides the information listed below to the Executive Secretary of the CNSA. Please request the fillable form from the CNSA or retrieve it from the National Website.

1. Name of new fraternity
2. Place of establishment (for example: church, friary, convent, or other ecclesial establishment)
3. City, State
4. Name of (Arch)Diocese
5. Name of (Arch) Bishop (Ordinary)
6. Name of Regional Fraternity
7. Name of friar province to which new fraternity is bonded
8. Name of OFS Regional Minister
9. Name of Provincial Minister
10. Name of Provincial Spiritual Assistant/Delegate
11. Name of local spiritual assistant
12. Who will sign part #2 (the friars' permission) of the document; Provincial Minister or Provincial Spiritual Assistant/Delegate?
13. Who will actually conduct the ceremony of establishment and sign the document; Provincial Minister, Provincial Spiritual Assistant/Delegate or other delegate of the Provincial Minister?
14. Anticipated Date of Establishment Ceremony, if available
15. Name, address, phone number of contact person (usually the Regional Minister) to whom documents should be returned

Document of Canonical Establishment Template

Once the information is received from the REC, the executive secretary of the CNSA prepares five originals of the official establishment document and sends them to the Regional Minister.



**FOR THE CANONICAL ESTABLISHMENT
OF A FRATERNITY
OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER
IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

In the Name of the Lord. Amen!

1. Request of the Regional Executive Council:

Upon the request of the emerging Secular Franciscan Community of _____ at _____ (Church) in the (Arch)diocese of _____, we, the Executive Council of the Secular Franciscan Regional Fraternity of _____, attest to the community's viability and fidelity, approve its request for Canonical Establishment, and ask the Provincial Minister of the (OFM or other) Province of _____ to establish the new fraternity canonically according to the Ritual, with the consent of the local Ordinary, and to provide for spiritual assistance for the fraternity.

Date: _____
_____, OFS, Regional Minister

2. Permission of the Prior Provincial Minister:

I, Friar _____, Provincial Minister of the (OFM or other) Province of _____, agree to assume canonical responsibility for this new fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order according to Canon 303 of the Code, delegate Friar _____ as the Provincial Spiritual Assistant to make sure that the fraternity is canonically established according to the Ritual, appoint _____ as the fraternity's Spiritual Assistant, and hereby request the consent of the local Ordinary.

Date: _____
(Seal) _____, Provincial Minister

3. Consent of the Ordinary:

I hereby give my consent, in accord with Canon 312 of the Code, for the canonical establishment of the above-mentioned Fraternity of _____ of the Secular Franciscan Order in this Diocese.

Date: _____
(Seal) _____, Ordinary

4. Establishment of the Fraternity:

The Fraternity of _____ of the Secular Franciscan Order at _____ (Church), (City), (State), was formally established according to the Ritual.

Date: _____
(name of officiating clergy)

Witness

Witness