



REGIONAL GUIDELINES

Updated 2-15-2014; Revised 9-23-2017, 8-26-2019

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SECTION I: Organization and Structure

Article 1. The Regional Fraternity

1.1 The Tau Cross Regional Fraternity, together with other Regional Fraternities in the United States, is an organic member of the worldwide Secular Franciscan Order, following the Rule promulgated in 1978 by Pope Paul VI, the General Constitutions approved in 2000 and the National Statutes approved in 2003.

1.2 The Tau Cross Regional Fraternity is an organic union of the local fraternities canonically established in the following geographical areas of New York State: The Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk.

1.3 The Tau Cross Regional Fraternity was established by the National Fraternity Council (NAFRA) on October 16, 1997.

Article 2. Governing Body

The Regional Fraternity is represented most fully at the Regional Fraternity Council, which is comprised of the Ministers (or authorized delegates) of the canonically established local fraternities of the Region plus the Regional Executive Council.

Article 3. Regional Fraternity Council

3.1 The Regional Fraternity Council has legislative, deliberative, and elective powers.

3.2 The Regional Fraternity Council suggests and approves policies to be implemented by the Regional Executive Council.

3.3 The Regional Fraternity Council shall meet in Chapter at least once year to promote the life of the Regional Fraternity and the local fraternities.

3.4 A quorum for doing official business at any meeting of the Regional Fraternity Council consists of fifty percent plus one of the total membership of the Regional Fraternity Council.

Article 4. Regional Executive Council

4.1 The Regional Fraternity is animated and guided by the Regional Executive Council, which is comprised of the following:

- Regional Minister
- Regional Vice Minister
- Regional Secretary
- Regional Treasurer
- Regional Formation Director
- At least one Regional Councilor
- Regional Spiritual Assistant

4.2 The Regional Conference of Spiritual Assistants is comprised of Spiritual Assistants appointed by the Provincial of each obedience of the Franciscan First Order and TOR; this Conference elects the Regional Spiritual Assistant from their number.

4.3 The Regional Executive Council may appoint positions as deemed necessary. However, only those duly elected to the council shall have voting rights.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Regional Executive Council are enumerated in the General Constitutions Article 62. In addition, they are responsible:

(a) to carry out the decisions and policies of the Regional Fraternity Council and suggest helpful policies to the Regional Fraternity Council

(b) to foster contact with other branches of the Franciscan family within the region

(c) to provide suggestions and programs that promote the Franciscan way of life of Secular Franciscans in the Regional Fraternity

(d) to provide the agenda for Regional Fraternity Council meetings and gatherings

(e) to recommend the establishment of new local fraternities, according to the provisions of the General Constitutions and the National Statutes

4.5 Meetings of The Regional Executive Council

(a) The Regional Executive Council shall meet at least twice each year, at a time and in a place determined by its membership.

(b) Special meetings of the Regional Executive Council may be called at the request of the Regional Minister or at the written request of two or more elected members of the council.

(c) The Regional Minister shall give notice of Regional Executive Council Meetings in writing at least one month prior to the meeting.

(d) A quorum for doing official business at any Regional Executive Council meeting will consist of fifty percent plus one of the Regional Executive Council members.

Article 5. Duties of Officers of the Regional Executive Council

5.1 The Regional Minister is the chief executive officer of the Regional Fraternity and has the duties set forth in the General Constitutions Article 63. In addition, the

Regional Minister is the spokesperson for the Regional Fraternity in all contacts with other church and civil organizations as well as with the general public.

5.2 The Regional Vice Minister collaborates with the Regional Minister in a fraternal spirit, takes the place of the Regional Minister in case of absence or temporary incapacity and assumes the of the Regional Minister in the event the office becomes vacant.

5.3 The Regional Secretary updates and preserves the important documents and correspondence of the Regional Fraternity and keeps the Minutes of meetings of the Regional Council and the Regional Executive Council.

5.4 The Regional Treasurer has duties set forth in the General Constitutions Article 52.4 and Statutes Article 6.4. In addition, the Regional Treasurer is responsible for the financial books and records of the Regional Fraternity and submits an annual budget to the Regional Fraternity Council for review and approval at the annual Chapter.

5.5 The Regional Formation Director coordinates the initial and ongoing formation for the Regional Fraternity according to the procedures outlined in the General Constitutions Articles 40-44 and National Statutes Article 19.

5.6 The Regional Councilor(s) perform duties as the Regional Executive Council may deem necessary.

5.7 The Regional Spiritual Assistant is a member by right of the Regional Executive Council and a vote in all matters except for financial affairs and in elective Chapters. (National Statutes 6.6)

Article 6. Regional Common Fund

6.1 The Common Fund of the Regional Fraternity is supported financially by its canonically established local Fraternities.

6.2 The Regional Fraternity Council shall determine the annual Fair Share Contribution to be made from the Common Fund of each local fraternity [See Article 20 below].

6.3 The Regional Minister is authorized to approve expenditures up to \$500. Expenditures over \$500 require the approval of the Regional Executive Council.

6.4 A financial audit shall be conducted every 3 years, prior to the end of the Regional Executive Council's term of office (National Statutes Article 4.5). A written report of the audit shall be presented at the Regional Fraternity Council Chapter.

6.5 The Common Fund of the Regional Fraternity shall pay the travel expenses of the Regional Executive Council when on official business.

SECTION II - Elections

Article 7: Election Procedures

All elections, at the regional and local level, are governed by the General Constitutions, Articles 76-79 and the National Statutes Article 23.4.

Article 8. Terms of Office

8.1 All elected positions in the Tau Cross Region, for both the Regional Executive Council and for local Fraternity Councils, are for a three-year period.

8.2 All Council Officers, both the Regional Executive Council and for local Fraternity Councils, may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years each. For a third and final successive to the office, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, is necessary.

8.3 The outgoing Minister may not be elected Vice-Minister.

Article 9. Regional Elections

9.1 The Regional Fraternity Council shall meet for the purpose of elections once every three years at a Chapter of Elections.

9.2 The Regional Executive Council shall consist of a Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer, Formation Director, and at least one elected Councilor. They shall be elected at the Regional Fraternity Chapter of Elections and shall be installed and take office at the conclusion of that Chapter.

9.3 The Regional Executive Council shall appoint a Nominations Committee to present a slate of nominees for the offices of the Regional Executive Council. It shall be the duty of the Nominations Committee to ensure that all candidates meet the qualifications for the office for which they are proposed, have reviewed the duties of that office, and are willing to serve if elected.

9.4 The National Minister shall delegate a Presider for the Chapter of Elections. The Presider shall determine election procedures in accordance with the provisions of the General Constitutions and National Statutes.

9.5 The National Conference of Spiritual Assistants shall appoint a Friar Witness for the Chapter of Elections. This Friar Witness may not be a Spiritual Assistant within the Region.

9.6 All members of the Regional Fraternity Council as defined in [Article2](#) above have active voice and may vote.

9.7 The Minister of each local fraternity has the primary responsibility for casting the vote of the fraternity. In the event a minister (or Vice Minister) is unable to attend the Chapter of Elections, an elected member of the fraternity council may be selected by that body and serve as duly authorized delegate and may cast the fraternity's vote. Such delegate must present written authorization from the Minister to represent the fraternity. (National Statutes Article 8.3)

9.8 No fraternity may cast more than a single vote nor may any person cast more than a single vote.

Article 10. Local Fraternity Elections

10.1 Each local fraternity shall elect at least the following: Minister, Vice Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and Formation Director.

10.2 The Regional Minister and the Regional Spiritual Assistant (or their representatives) shall serve as Presider and Friar Witness, respectively.

10.3 All permanently professed members may vote and hold office.

10.4 Prior to the day of elections a slate of candidates should be prepared. During the election further nominations may be made from the floor.

10.5 Neither absentee ballots nor proxy votes are permitted.

10.6 When all of the positions are filled the Presider will confirm the election and prepare an Election Report, which is kept in the Local Fraternity files, with a copy to the Regional Secretary.

Article 11. Office Vacancies, Resignation and Removal

The General Constitutions, Articles 81 to 84 shall govern office vacancy, resignation, and removal.

SECTION III - Fraternal Life

Article 12. The Local Fraternity

12.1 It is at the local fraternity that activities have their greatest meaning. The Fraternity Council should expend great care to provide for thought-provoking activities and programs to foster Franciscan life and deepen Franciscan spirituality among their brothers and sisters. (National Statutes Article 18.9)

12.2 The fraternity should offer the brothers and sisters opportunities for coming together and collaborating through monthly gatherings. Although the amount of time allotted to various activities may vary from one gathering to the next, each of these activities should be present at every gathering:

- prayer
- formation
- business/announcements
- socialization

12.3 Each local fraternity should conduct an annual Chapter, at which the activities of the past year and plans for the coming year, including a financial budget, are reviewed.

12.4 The local fraternities are subject to the vigilance of the local Diocesan Bishop as they perform their apostolic activities within the local churches. (National Statutes Article 16.3)

12.5 The external sign that is to be worn by brothers and sisters of the OFS in the United States is the Tau Cross. (National Statutes Article 16.4)

Article 13. Formation

13.1 The National Statutes, Article 19, will govern Orientation, Initial Formation and Profession.

13.2 Ongoing Formation: we are always in the process of being formed. Therefore, at all our fraternity gatherings some type of ongoing formation should be presented. (General Constitutions Article 44.3)

Article 14. Promotion of Vocations

Vocations to the OFS come about through the spiritual "modeling" we offer to non-committed brothers and sisters in our lives. This "promotion" of vocations to the OFS is a duty of all the brothers and sisters and is a sign of the vitality of the fraternities themselves. (General Constitutions Article 45.)

Article 15. Spiritual Assistance

15.1 By virtue of the vital reciprocity between the religious and the secular members of the Franciscan Family, spiritual assistance of the OFS fraternities must be assured as a fundamental element of communion. The Spiritual Assistant is the person designated to carry out this service a specific OFS fraternity. (General Constitutions Article 89)

15.2 The Fraternity Council should request that the Provincial Minister of the Province to which the fraternity is bonded appoint a suitable and prepared Spiritual Assistant. (General Constitutions Article 91)

Article 16. Professed, Excused and Lapsed Status

16.1 Professed: A professed brother/sister is one who has made an act of profession as defined in the Rule and the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order.

16.2 Excused: The term "excused" may be granted by the Fraternity Council for specific and appropriate reasons such as health, family, work or distance. This does not mean such a person is freed from other obligations, such as praying some daily office, contributing the Fraternity Common Fund, and wearing the Tau Cross. An excused brother/sister enjoys full status of membership in the fraternity. As fraternity brothers and sisters become unable to attend gatherings on a regular basis, the local Fraternity Council should set up a method by which regular contacts are maintained. (General Constitutions Article 53.3, National Statutes 18.10)

16.3 Lapsed: Professed brothers and sisters who do not attend meetings, or support the fraternity financially, and who, after personal invitations to return, reject or ignore the invitation, will be termed "lapsed". The brother/sister should be notified in writing of this change in status. (National Statutes Article 18.7.b)

Article 17. Transfer, Withdrawal, Suspension and Dismissal

Transfer, withdrawal, suspension, and dismissal of brothers/sisters should be done according to the General Constitutions, Articles 55 to 59.

Article 18. The Local Fraternity Council

18.1 The local Fraternity Council shall perform the duties as described in the General Constitutions, Article 50, and also faithfully implement the directives and decisions from the Regional Fraternity, National Fraternity and International Fraternity.

18.2 The Fraternity Spiritual Assistant is a member by right of the Fraternity Council and has a vote in all matters except for financial affairs and elections.

18.3 The Fraternity Council shall meet on a regular basis. Minutes of these meetings should be kept by the Fraternity Secretary. All activities of the Fraternity Council are confidential.

Article 19. The Fraternity Common Fund

19.1 It is the responsibility of every brother and sister to contribute to the Fraternity Common Fund, according to his or her means.

19.2 The Common Fund should be used for such expenses as:

- Payment of Fair Share Contribution
- Operating expenses of the fraternity

- Stipends
- Donations for use of the meeting place
- Donations for apostolic activities and charities

19.3 The fraternity should present to the Regional Minister and to the Regional Spiritual Assistant (or their representative) a stipend appropriate to the journey made and expenses incurred for fraternal and pastoral visits as well as elections. (National Statutes Article 18.8)

Article 20. Fair Share Contributions

20.1 The Regional Fraternity shall determine the annual Fair Share Contribution to be made from the common Fund of each local fraternity based on the number of professed members (active and excused) and Candidates in formation, but not those who have been deemed lapsed. (Rule 25, General Constitutions Article 30.3, National Statutes Article 18.7.

For the purposes of determining the fraternity's Fair Share Contribution to the Regional Fraternity, a professed brother/sister is one who participates both by attending fraternity gatherings and by providing financial support to the fraternity according to his/her means or whom the fraternity has excused from such obligations. (National Statutes Article 18.7.a) [Note that "Lapsed" brothers and sisters are not included.]

20.2 The fraternity's contribution is made from their Common Fund. This is a fraternity responsibility; that is, if a brother or sister is unable to contribute, the fraternity Common Fund should be used.

Article 21. Inactive Fraternity

21.1 If a fraternity becomes inactive, its records shall be acquired by the Regional Fraternity. (General Constitutions Article 48).

21.2 Provision will be made with the help of the Regional Executive Council for remaining brothers and sisters to transfer to the nearest active fraternity.

Article 22. Apostolic Commissions

22.1 Our OFS Rule encourages all Secular Franciscans to bring the gospel to life in the area of:

- Peace and Justice (Rule 15)
- Work (Rule 16)
- Family (Rule 17)
- Ecology (Rule 18)

22.2 Brothers and sisters in the local fraternities should collaborate in apostolic activities that promote these ideals.

22.3 The local fraternities should communicate their activities in these areas to the Regional and National Fraternities.

Article 23. Relations with the National Fraternity Council

23.1 The Regional Minister is a member of the National Fraternity Council and attends its meetings. If the Regional Minister is unable to attend the annual Chapter of the National Fraternity Council, the Regional Vice Minister or another elected member of the Regional Executive Council shall represent the Region.

23.2 The Regional Fraternity contributes annually to the Common Fund of the National Fraternity as determined by the National Fraternity Council.

Article 24. Relations with the Franciscan Family and the Church

24.1 Secular Franciscans should seek to live in life-giving reciprocal communion with all the members of the Franciscan family. (General Constitutions Article 98)

24.2 The vocation to "rebuild" the Church requires that Secular Franciscans live in union with the local Church. (General Constitutions Articles 99-103)

Article 25. Franciscan Youth and Young Adults

The OFS should be ready to share its experience of evangelical life with youth and young adults. (General Constitutions Articles 96-97)

Article 26. Fraternal and Pastoral Visitations

26.1 The provisions of the General Constitutions Articles 92-95, concerning Fraternal and Pastoral Visitations, will apply.

26.2 Regional Visitations: Once every three years the Regional Minister, with the consent of the Regional Executive Council, shall invite the National Minister to make a Fraternal Visit to the Regional Fraternity and shall request a Pastoral Visit from the National Conference of Spiritual Assistants.

26.3 Fraternity Visitations: Once every three years, the local Fraternity Minister shall request a Fraternal and Pastoral Visit from the Regional Executive Council and Regional Spiritual Assistant.

Article 27. Interpretation of the Guidelines

27.1 Interpretation of these guidelines shall follow the rules of Canon Law, civil law where applicable, the OFS Rule, General Constitutions and National Statutes.

27.2 In the event of any dispute, the most persuasive resource is prayerful consideration of our Father and Founder St Francis, that most courteous and peace-loving man, and his probable of view.

Article 28. Amendments

These Regional Guidelines may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the Regional Fraternity Council. Proposed amendments must be circulated to the Regional Fraternity Council at least 60 days prior to being voted upon.

Approved: August 17, 1996

Amended: April 26, 2003

Revised and Approved: April 23, 2005, September 23, 2017, August 26, 2019

