



Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis Region Secular Franciscan Order

Alabama · Georgia · North Carolina · South Carolina · Tennessee

The Fraternal and Pastoral Visitation

The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is: to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer help to fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church as stated in Article 26.

The fraternal visit is a moment of communion, an expression of the service and concrete interest of the secular leaders at the various levels, so that the fraternity may grow and be faithful to its vocation. It is not an “interrogation” but a sincere offer to assist. Please don’t hesitate to ask for any help.

The pastoral visit is to guarantee and to promote the observance of the SFO Rule and Constitutions as well as fidelity to the Franciscan charism.

The Visitation is the fraternity’s opportunity to evaluate themselves, to discern the direction the community is growing and to identify strengths, weaknesses and challenges. Visitors may be able to offer suggestions and assistance.

The Visitation will include a reminder to continue focus on the Four Pillars of our Franciscan life - SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION, FRATERNITY AND APOSTOLATE.

Visitation Process

Fraternity ministers are responsible to request fraternal and pastoral visitations

(General Constitutions Article 51, 2.d.)

The regional executive council recommends that a Visitation be scheduled within six to eighteen months *after* an election. This allows the newly elected council to ask for advice and recommendations early in their term rather than when it is concluding.

1. 3-6 months after election the local minister, with consent of the local council, will send a request to regional minister requesting a specific date and time for next visitation to occur within the next 18 months, with 6 months notice.
2. The regional minister, with consent of the regional executive council will determine who on the REC will conduct the fraternal visitation as requested. The regional spiritual assistant will appoint a representative to make the pastoral visitation if unable to attend.
3. The regional minister will notify the fraternity minister of the selection at least 3 months in advance and send the pre-visitation forms for completion.
4. The fraternity minister, will *insure* that the council and fraternity complete the requested documents and return to the designated visitors one month before the visitation date.
5. The fraternity will provide a stipend to BSSF Region.
6. The visitors will prepare a report of the visitation to be submitted to the full fraternity with copy to provincial spiritual assistant and regional council.

Visitation Format

Visitation will include the following.

The fraternity should expect to set aside more time than normal for their Visitation to allow time for open dialogue in addition to observation of regular gathering.

1. Review of Records and Resources by Fraternal Visitor. (not an audit)
 - Only records and resources since last Visitation will be reviewed.
 - Before attending the fraternity gathering. Council members are encouraged to attend.
 - Suggestions for retention of records and forms available will be offered.
2. Observation of fraternity gathering including ongoing formation.
 - Begin with “Prayer for the Pastoral or Fraternal Visit” from the Ritual, pages 50-52.
 - Observation of Initial Formation, i.e., Candidacy, Inquiry ,Orientation, if applicable.
 - Dialogue with professed members, candidates, inquirers and orientees.
 - Social gathering with members of the fraternity. Please have nametags.
3. Meeting with spiritual assistant.
4. Meeting with council after meeting with fraternity. To discuss:
 - Past Annual Fraternity Report.
 - Fraternal and Pastoral Pre-Visitation Questionnaire and responses.
 - Review of Records and Resources
 - Answer any questions council may have.
5. Minister should furnish the following to visitors one month in advance
 - Confirmation of the Visitation dates.
 - Roster including professed members, candidates, inquirers and orientees.
 - Schedule and plan to accommodate the Visitation requests.
 - Directions to destination.
 - Plan for overnight accommodations

Fraternities and groups will provide a stipend to the Visitors for travel expenses in accordance with the *National Statutes* article #18:8. Check should be made to BSSF Region. See attachment #6 for further details.