

September 2019 – Oklahoma Province OCDS

This policy supersedes all previous statements on the appointment of Spiritual Assistants.

Instructions for petitioning for the appointment of a Spiritual Assistant

Background information from the Constitutions (#43-45).

The Provincial, usually aided by the Provincial Delegate - “he is to make visitation of the communities [the OCDS provincial council is delegated by the Provincial to make the visitations]...and after consultation with the Council, appoint a Spiritual Assistant for communities”; “The Spiritual Assistant must be well-versed in Carmelite Spirituality and well-informed in the Church’s teachings concerning the role of lay people in the Church”; “the Provincial may appoint as Assistant one who is not a friar of the Order, always with the consent of the candidate’s own superior”; “the Provincial Delegate will assist in this appointment by interviewing the candidate. They will look for the same qualities as mentioned in number 44 of these norms.”

Practical Application

At the beginning of each triennium, one of the duties of the new local Council is to assess the suitability of the community’s Spiritual Assistant (SA) according to the above criteria. They discern whether to ask for re-appointment or to find a new SA.

The Council is responsible to ask the Provincial either for the re-appointment of the SA or the appointment of a new (SA). It is the responsibility of the Provincial to review and appoint these Assistants.

In the case of an **OCD friar**, the Council makes a formal petition to the friar, copying the Provincial. If the friar accepts, the Council asks the Provincial to make the appointment.

In the case of a person who is **not an OCD friar**, the Council of the community must submit a formal petition to the candidate to consider being the Spiritual Assistant to the community in question; the candidate must formally accept, citing as well the permission of their Ordinary. These then are to be forwarded to the Provincial with a formal request for the appointment of the Spiritual Assistant to the community. The appointment is only for the triennium.

Care must be taken to explain the responsibilities. (see *appendix*)

Visitators are responsible to interview the Spiritual Assistants and assess their capacity to fulfill their duties and obligations and send the recommendation or lack of recommendation to the Provincial.

Appendix

From *the Pastoral Care of the Secular Order*

Spiritual Assistants

Art. 14

1. The spiritual assistant is the person designated by the competent major superior to carry out this service for a specific community of the OCDS.

2. In order to be a witness of Discalced Carmelite spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious towards the secular Discalced Carmelites, and to be a bond of communion between his Order and the OCDS, the spiritual assistant should preferably be a Discalced Carmelite Friar.

Art. 15

1. The principal task of the assistant is to foster a deeper insight into Discalced Carmelite spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the Secular Discalced Carmelites. *[Side note: The primary responsibility for formation lies with the local Council. While the SA offers the Council support, the community must not rely solely on him for their ongoing formation and maturing in the OCDS vocation.]*

2. In the Council of the community and at the time of community elections the assistant will be respectful of the responsibilities and role of the Secular Discalced Carmelites, giving them priority with regard to the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the community.

3. The assistant, when invited by the Council, participates actively in the discussions and decisions taken by the Council or by the Chapter. *[Side note: The SA offers support and information, but does not have a vote in Council decisions.]*

4. The assistant is specifically responsible for the animation of liturgical celebrations and spiritual reflections during the meetings of the Council or of the community.

Art. 16

1. The assistant is appointed by the competent major Superior, after consultation with the Council of the community concerned.

2. The appointment of the assistant is made in writing and for a specified time.

3. When it is not possible to give the community a spiritual assistant who is a member of the Order, the competent major Superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:

- religious of other Carmelite institutes;
- clergy who are Secular Discalced Carmelites, specially prepared for such service;
- other diocesan clerics or non-Discalced Carmelite religious, specially prepared for such service.

Art. 17

The local assistant fosters communion within the community and between the community and the Province. In harmony with the Provincial or Provincial Delegate, the assistant sees to it that between the religious and the secular communities a real life-giving union with each other exists. He fosters the active presence of the community in the Church and in society.

Art. 18

1. The local assistant has the very important responsibility to support the Council of the community, especially the director of formation, in the formation of the candidates. The council may invite the local assistant to express his assessment of each of the candidates

at different stages of formation. *[Side note: This paragraph applies to OCD friars and SAs who are well-grounded in their understanding of the Secular Carmelite vocation. The ultimate decision lies with the Council. The SA does not vote and may not override the Council's decision.]*

2. The Council may ask the assistant to discuss with brothers or sisters who have difficulties, who want to retire from the community, or who act in serious opposition to the Constitutions.

The online document is the only one to be considered official.