

International Franciscan Conference of the Institutes and Monasteries of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis

*"And wherever the brothers and sisters may be together or meet other brothers and sisters, let them give witness that they are members of one family.
And let each one confidently make known his need to the other, for if a mother has such care for her son born according to the flesh, should not someone care more diligently for his brothers and sisters according to the spirit?"*

(cf. RB 6, 7-8

1 Th 2:7

Reg. TOR 7,23)

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FOREWORD

The International Conference of the Institutes and Monasteries of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis has been established in the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, which called for all religious families to renew and update themselves by returning to the sources of their foundation (*Perfectae Caritatis*, 2).

Members of the many institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis throughout the world saw the necessity of renewing the Rule so that it would meet the needs of the present day. For this, they used the writings of Saint Francis as their principal source.

Representatives of several women's institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis met in Assisi in 1976 to share ideas about the proposed texts of the Rule which had already been drafted in various countries. This move was repeated in 1979, when larger numbers attended and the participation of the men's institutes was achieved. At that meeting the International Franciscan Office (IFO) was elected.

From that time on, the movement grew steadily until in March 1982 a general assembly was held in Rome, attended by some 200 general superiors of institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. A new draft of the text of the Rule was approved almost unanimously and later presented to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, who approved and promulgated it on December 8th, 1982 with the Brief, *Franciscanum Vitae Propositum*.

In order to ensure that the cooperation achieved through the drafting of the Rule would continue effectively, the members present at the general assembly of 1982 expressed their wish that a permanent structure be set up for this purpose - an International Franciscan Conference, which would also represent the institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis in the Church, with the Franciscan family and the world.

The IFC-TOR is canonically established and was recognized by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and for Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL) on May 6, 1989 (Prot.Sp.R.648/86).

This International Franciscan Conference is governed by the present Statutes.

STATUTES

Chapter I | General Norms

1. Name

The name of this organisation is: The International Conference of Institutes and Monasteries of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis (generally referred to as the International Franciscan Conference or the IFC-TOR).

2. Headquarters

The IFC-TOR has its headquarters in Rome.

3. Origins

The IFC-TOR was established at the constituent assembly of the representatives of 135 institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular, which was held in Assisi from 19-26 October 1985.

4. Membership in the Conference

4.1. *Active members*

Active membership in the IFC-TOR is open to every Franciscan institute or monastery of brothers or sisters, of pontifical or diocesan right, whose members profess the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis. A written formal application, with proof of their diocesan or pontifical status, is required from the General Minister.

An institute or monastery may withdraw from membership in the IFC-TOR upon the written request of the General Minister. This withdrawal results in the loss of active and passive voice within the IFC-TOR.

4.2. *Associate Members*

Any Franciscan religious group admitted by the council may be an associate member of the IFC-TOR, in accordance with article 9.2.15.

5. Aims

The aims of the IFC-TOR are:

5.1. To promote genuine communion among the institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular throughout the world, by fostering Franciscan life and spirituality in harmony with the spirit and content of this Rule and its fundamental values, which are based on the Gospel and in accordance with the teachings of the Church (cf. 4.1.);

5.2. to create and maintain solidarity among the institutes and monasteries by the following means:

5.2.1. mutual assistance, both spiritual and material;

5.2.2. collaboration in the apostolate;

5.2.3. mutual information and communication;

5.2.4. assistance in formation;

5.2.5. special concern for smaller or more isolated institutes or monasteries;

5.2.6. the creation and support of regional or national Franciscan federations or organisations, wherever one or more of these means are desired.

- 5.3. to cooperate with the First and Second Orders and with the Secular Franciscan Order;
- 5.4. to encourage and disseminate research in Franciscan spirituality and history;
- 5.5. to represent the institutes and monasteries belonging to this IFC-TOR in the Church, within the Franciscan family and in the world;
- 5.6. to support or initiate efforts to safeguard the universal rights of every human person according to the Gospel, with special concern for respect for life, freedom, justice and peace, and the environment.

5.7 Annual Contribution:

In order to be able to attain the objectives mentioned above, a voluntary annual contribution is asked for, the amount of which is established by the Council.

6. Respect for the autonomy of the institutes and monasteries

The IFC-TOR commits itself to respect and guarantee the autonomy of each institute or monastery and the independence of each federation of Franciscan institutes or monasteries.

7. Organisation of the IFC-TOR

The IFC-TOR achieves its aim through the following structures:

- the general assembly;
- the council;
- the secretariat;
- the finance office;

Chapter II | The General Assembly

8.1. Composition

The general assembly is composed of:

8.1.1. *ex-officio members*:

- a) the General Ministers of all institutes and monasteries of the Third Order Regular who have agreed to be part of the IFC-TOR, or their delegates duly mandated in writing (cf. 4.1.);
- b) the members of the council.

Only the above-mentioned are *ex-officio* members. These same members, when present in the general assembly, have the right to vote, as specified in canon 167.

Members of the council keep their right to vote until the end of the general assembly at which time their duly elected successors take office.

8.1.2. *invited members*:

These are associate members of the IFC-TOR as defined in 4.2. or other participants as defined in 8.3.3. These members do not have the right to vote.

8.2. Competence

The general assembly is the decision-making and legislative body of the IFC-TOR.

The general assembly:

- 8.2.1. sets guidelines for implementing the aims of the IFC-TOR (Cf. 5);
- 8.2.2. recommends the formation of committees to carry out particular tasks;
- 8.2.3. drafts and approves resolutions on matters of general interest;
- 8.2.4. elects
 - a. the president, who is a General Minister;
 - b. five Councilors, who are general ministers or general councilors nominated by their general minister. (At least two councilors must be general ministers.)

These councilors duly represent

- the different branches of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis,
- the different parts of the world;

- 8.2.5. receives reports from the council and the committees, and may make any observations or recommendations deemed necessary;
- 8.2.6. examines the accounts and budgets of the IFC-TOR, and has decision-making rights over them;
- 8.2.7. may modify the statutes by a two-thirds majority vote in favour (cf.12);
- 8.2.8. may dissolve the organisation, for which a two-thirds majority in favour is required (cf. 13);
- 8.2.9. may summon an extraordinary general assembly in one of the following ways:
 - a) if a third of the members present at a general assembly calls for an extraordinary general assembly, that motion must be put to the vote immediately at the same assembly. A two-thirds majority is required for deciding if an extraordinary general assembly is to take place;
 - b) alternatively, the general assembly may decide to adjourn for a period less than the normal statutory interval between general assemblies;
 - c) outside the usual times, one-third of the institutes and monasteries may call for an extraordinary general assembly.

8.3. Procedure

- 8.3.1. The general assembly meets every four years.
- 8.3.2. The president convokes the general assembly and presides over it until the end of the assembly and/or the installation of the new president. (cf. Can. 179.)
- 8.3.3. With prior approval or upon the invitation of the council, other persons may attend the general assembly.
- 8.3.4. At its opening session, the general assembly approves the rules for the conduct of its meetings.

8.3.5. The outgoing president presides over the elections according to the process described in 9.4 and announces the election of the new president unless he or she is re-elected; in that case the vice-president announces the election.

8.3.6. In a vote on any decision, an absolute majority is required. If after two ballots the result is a tie, the president may break the tie, casting the decisive vote (cf. Can. 119.2).

8.3.7. The secretary general is responsible for seeing that the minutes of the assembly are written up. They are signed by the president and the secretary general.

Chapter III | The Council

9.1. Composition

9.1.1. The council is made up of the president and five councilors. (cf. 8.2.4)

9.1.2. Active members may nominate their candidates directly and/or through the national federations at the general assembly, following a procedure established by the council.

9.2. Responsibilities

9.2.1. The council is the executive body of the IFC-TOR. It implements the decisions and resolutions made by the general assembly, and is accountable to it.

9.2.2. The president, vice-president and secretary general constitute the coordinating body of the council. They implement the resolutions and guidelines of the council and conduct day-to-day business.

9.2.3. With due respect for these statutes and the guidelines given by the general assembly, the council may draw up its own program and procedures for conducting its meetings.

9.2.4 The council is an entity of shared responsibility. It is the president's special duty to maintain and encourage this shared responsibility. The president is accountable in the highest degree to the IFC-TOR, and in particular to the general assembly.

9.2.5. The council determines the amount for the annual contribution of the members.

9.2.6. The council sets the date and the agenda of each general assembly and is responsible for its preparation (cf. 8.2.6).

9.2.7. The president of the council presides at the general assembly.

9.2.8. At the general assembly, the council must present documented reports on its own activities and on those of the secretariat, the finance office and any committees; these reports are to cover the entire period since the last general assembly.

9.2.9. The council may give instructions to the secretariat and the finance office, and may also entrust tasks to the committees recommended by the general assembly.

9.2.10. The council may also authorise the establishment of committees.

9.2.11. Ordinarily, it is the president who represents the IFC-TOR whenever the occasion or circumstances require. If the president or vice-president is not available, the president can delegate this to another councillor or the secretary general.

9.2.12. The council appoints the finance officer and the secretary general.

9.2.13. The council has the responsibility for seeing that a financial report is presented at the general assembly. This report is drawn up by the finance officer and covers the preceding four-year period.

9.2.14. At the annual meeting of the council the finance officer presents a financial report on the previous fiscal year which must be approved.

9.2.15. The council may admit as associate members new Franciscan groups not yet officially recognised as religious institutes or monasteries, on the basis of the following criteria for admission:

a) that they profess the Rule of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis;

b) that they have at least received the approval of the local Ordinary;

c) that they submit a written report on their foundation and activity in the Church; this report should be countersigned by a major superior of the First Order of Saint Francis or of an institute or monastery having full membership on the IFC-TOR.

The superior of each of these groups may attend the general assembly, but without active or passive voice.

9.2.16. In special circumstances the council can call for an extraordinary general assembly. During such an assembly, there will be no elections.

9.2.17. The Council is responsible for the preservation of archival materials held at the IFC-TOR offices and at St. Bonaventure University in USA.

9.3. Working procedure

9.3.1 The council meets at least once a year, and whenever the president or at least four members deem it necessary.

9.3.2 The secretary general, in the name of the president, summons the council members and sends them the agenda.

9.3.3 The quorum necessary for meetings of the council is 4 members (2/3).

9.3.4 The president presides at the council meetings. If the president is unable to exercise his/her office, his/her place is taken by the vice-president.

9.3.5 Ordinarily, decisions and deliberations in the council are reached by consensus among the members. In cases where such consensus is impossible, the president or presiding member calls for a vote. In such cases, a two-thirds majority is required.

9.3.6 The minutes of the meetings of the council are drafted under the responsibility of the

secretary general and, following their approval by the council, they are signed by the president and the secretary general. Information is sent to all the institutes and monasteries of the IFC-TOR and to the national Franciscan federations.

9.3.7 The president, or the secretary general with the agreement of the president, may invite observers to attend the council meetings, with the approval or at the request of the council itself.

9.3.8. The secretary general of a Franciscan organisation or a specialist may attend meetings of the council as an observer, upon written request addressed to the council and with its approval.

9.3.9. The council may reserve the right to hold closed sessions.

9.4. Methods of election and appointment

9.4.1. All elections are conducted by secret ballot.

9.4.2. The term of office for members of the council is four years, renewable once only.

9.4.3 In the ballot for the election of the president, who must live in or near Rome, a two-thirds majority is required on the first two ballots. In the third ballot, an absolute majority (half plus one) is required. If a fourth ballot is necessary, the vote is taken between the two candidates with the greatest number of votes or, if there are more than two, between the two senior by age. If after this fourth ballot the votes are equal, the senior by age is elected (cf. Can 119.1).

9.4.4. In the ballots for the election of councilors, two separate elections must be held. In both elections an absolute majority is required for election. The first is for the two councilors living in or near Rome. After two inconclusive ballots, the vote is between the two candidates with the highest number of votes, or if there are more than two, between the two oldest. If on the third ballot the two candidates receive an equal number of votes, the senior by age is elected (cf. Can. 119.1.).

9.4.5 In the second election all the remaining nominees will be on the ballot. Three councilors will be elected from this list. After two inconclusive ballots, the vote is between the two candidates with the highest number of votes, or if there are more than two, between the two oldest. If on the third ballot the two candidates receive an equal number of votes, the senior by age is elected (cf. Can. 119.1.).

9.4.6. At an appropriate time, the president, with the deliberative vote of the council, appoints the secretary general who is not a General Minister, from among the nominations sent in by member institutes and monasteries and/or national Franciscan federations. In case of a tie, the president casts the deciding vote (cf. 8.3.6. and 9.1.2.).

The secretary general participates in the council meeting without deliberative vote.

9.4.7. At their first meeting the council elects one of the councilors who is a general minister as vice-president who will reside, in the vicinity of Rome.

9.4.8. In the event of the resignation or the death of the president, the vice-president takes his/her place until the next general assembly. The council appoints a new member according to the norms contained in article 9.4.9.

9.4.9. In the event of the resignation or death of a member of the council, he or she will be

replaced by the one who obtained the next highest number of votes at the last general assembly. (cf. 8.2.4.).

If the secretary general or the finance officer is to be replaced, the president of the council appoints the new secretary general or finance administrator following the deliberative vote of the council. (cf.9.4.6)

Chapter IV | The Secretariat

10.1. Composition

- a) The secretariat is composed of the secretary general and assistants if needed.
- b) The council approves the choice of the assistant(s).

10.2. Responsibilities

10.2.1. The office of secretary general requires full-time commitment in the service of the aims of the IFC-TOR.

10.2.2. The secretary general has overall responsibility for the secretariat and for the choice of the assistant(s) (cf. 10.1.b.).

10.2.3. The secretary general receives his/her mandate from the council, and works closely with the president.

His/her term of office is four years, renewable when approved by the council.

10.2.4. The secretary general is the full-time executive officer of the council. His/her duty is to promote the initiatives and to plan, implement and coordinate the various activities approved by the IFC-TOR, following the guidelines of the council. He/she directs and co-ordinates the day-to-day business of the Conference.

10.2.5. Through the secretariat, the secretary general

- a) provides material services for the general assembly, the council and the committees;
- b) provides information and documentation to member institutes and monasteries and to the national Franciscan association.

10.2.6. Each year, the secretary general gives the council a report on the activities of the secretariat.

Chapter V | Finances

11.1 The finance officer is responsible to the council, the general assembly and the Italian government for the financial management of the organisation.

11.2 The financial assets of the IFC-TOR consist of:

- a) a voluntary annual contribution to be paid by each member institute, monastery and associate group (cf. 5.7).

- b) any subsidies or gifts received;
- c) interest on investments.

11.3. The control of ordinary expenditures is the responsibility of the president or the vice-president and the secretary general. Any extraordinary expenditures require the consent of the council.

11.4. The finance officer must present an annual financial report to the council (cf. 9.2.14).

At each ordinary general assembly, he/she presents a report, approved by the council, covering the entire period since the last general assembly (cf. 8.2.6 and 9.2.13.).

11.5. The council will designate the persons having the authority to sign cheques. The finance officer, the secretary general and at least one member of the council will have this authority.

Chapter VI | General Matters

12. Modification of Statutes

The Statutes can be modified by the general assembly alone, which must express its opinion by a two-thirds majority vote (cf.8.2.7.). The proposed changes will be considered only if they have been communicated to all member institutes and monasteries at least six months before the opening of the general assembly (cf. 4.1. and 8.1.1.).

13. Dissolution

The decision to dissolve the organisation may be taken only by an ordinary or extraordinary general assembly, which must decide the matter by a two-thirds majority vote (cf. 8.2.8.).

Following a vote in favour of dissolution, the general assembly will decide on the disposal of assets and appoint a special commission to conduct the liquidation.

14. Supplementary regulations

In addition to the Statutes, the IFC-TOR could have a collection of supplementary regulations covering in greater detail, the methods, procedures and instructions concerning its internal organisation.

The council is responsible for drafting these supplementary regulations, which may be subject to further revision.

Everything in the supplementary regulations must be in accordance with the Statutes.

15. Special cases

In every case not covered by these Statutes, the general assembly may take the decision or, in an urgent case arising between meetings of the general assembly, the council has the power of decision until the next general assembly.