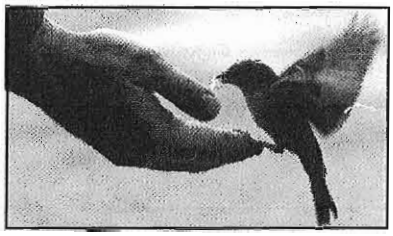
CNSA
News and Views
Franciscan life in the 21st Century



Lester Bach OFM Cap

Important ideas on SA's

There is some confusion and a variety of ideas about the role of Spiritual assistants (SA's) in the OFS. The training program *(Franciscan Family Connections)* is good but needs local additions. In addition, people called to be a SA need good *"people skills."* Intellectual ideas and spirituality are good, but not quite enough. SA's must be respectful and open with people. They need to be non-judgmental as they listen to people. They need to be clear about issues without dominating a conversation. Knowing the Rule and OFS documents is important but not enough. ***People skills*** are vital for a good SA.

How does the SA fit into the OFS way of life? There are many ideas that may be only partially true. Reflect on these OFS documents.

*In various ways and forms but **in life-giving union** with each other, they (SA's) intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.* OFS Rule #1

*By virtue of the **vital reciprocity** between the religious (SA's) and the secular members of the Franciscan family and in regard to the responsibilities of major superiors, spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the OFS at all levels must be assured as a **fundamental element of communion.***
Constitutions - Article 89.1

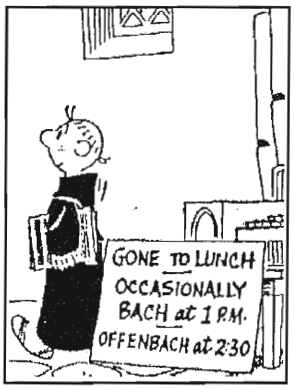
*1. Rule 1 Secular Franciscans should seek ways to live in **life-giving reciprocal communion** with all members of the Franciscan family. They should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular Institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognize Francis as a model and inspiration **in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalization, and serve the cause of peace.***
Constitutions - Article 98.1

Vital reciprocity and *life-giving union* describe the role of a SA. The word *vital* means something that is essential to life. *Reciprocity* means a *mutual exchange*. Hence, ***a SA is vital to OFS life and includes a mutual exchange between the OFS and the SA that is essential for the life of the whole Franciscan family.*** A few conclusions ...

+ A fraternity cannot be canonically established without a SA and a bonding to a province of the 1st Order/TOR. This is done no later than the beginning of the last three years of an *emerging group*. The council of an *emerging group,* after cosultation, is appointed by the REC and mentored by the sponsoring fraternity council. *(cf. Handbook for SA's to the OFS* {2012}- Pages 37- 41 - Smoky Valley Printing - cf. back page of TAU-USA)

+ At all levels, only the major superiors of the 1st Order / TOR, or their delegate, have the authority to appoint a SA. It is the duty of the major superior (or his delegate), in consultation with the appropriate council of the OFS.

+ Additions to the training program for SA's should reflect the needs of the OFS Region involved. The people who mentor the program are encouraged to develop additional elements in collaboration with the regional council.



Here I am again! My brothers at CNSA asked me to continue writing this column. I enjoy it, so it was easy to say "Yes!"

The graphic in the title, with the bird-in-hand, has a saying that goes with it: *Little Bird, fly over the barbed wire and the ruins of war, and sing a song of peace!*

Living in a world of violence, singing a *song of peace* is a symbol of what all Franciscans should do - We ... *sing a song of peace - everywhere!"* Or, as the OFS Rule puts it:

*Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should **seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue,** trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.*
OFS Rule - #19

What are you doing? In your home? In your neighborhood? In your parish? Where violence reigns? In your political talk? When you address immigration issues? When changing opinions? At work? In fraternity life? In prayerfulness for peace? In compassion for those in need? In dialogue on issues? In your personal conversions? In dealing with "enemies?"

Well, what?