

January 19, 2022

Dear Sisters and Associates,

Thank you for your openness and participation in the process and journey toward shared canonical governance. We are grateful to those who joined in the October zoom meetings on the Draft Statutes and to those who sent in their comments.

On January 5th, the Task Force met via Zoom with the OPSCC leadership. The leadership received the packet we are now providing you prior to January 5. At that meeting, members of the five leadership teams responded with a “yes” to this question:

*Does your leadership affirm forwarding the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the members for a leaning in Phase V of this process in late January – early March on whether they support sending it to the Vatican Office for Religious for review and approval?*

The Leadership’s unanimous affirmation to this question leads to initiating Phase V in which the membership of our congregations will be asked to give a leaning about sending the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the Vatican Office for Religious. For your study and reflection, the Phase V document attached to this letter contains the Working Text of the Association Statutes, the Word Bank with its Expansion, the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) with its Expansion, and the Timeline for Phase V.

Each of us are asked to reflect individually on the following question:

*Am I willing to affirm sending the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the Vatican Office for Religious for review and approval?*

The leadership of each congregation is now in the process of choosing its meeting date for taking the leaning on this question.

It is a privilege to serve you and we are grateful to continue in this journey with you. Please let us know if you have any questions for us or pieces of wisdom that will assist us in our work.

With gratitude,

*Diane Morgan, Beth McGarvey, Ellenrita Purcaro, Terry Rickard, Pat Tavis, Lena Picillo, Pat Magee, Catherine Walsh (chair), Grace Hogan, Sheila Brennan, Lynn Jarrell, OSU (facilitator)*

Enclosure: Working Text of the Association Statutes and accompanying materials, Timeline for Phase V



**Working Text of the Association Statutes**

**January 5, 2022**

**I. Identity, Spirit and Mission**

The spirit and mission of St. Dominic have brought to birth branches of the Order of Preachers throughout the world. Congregations of Dominican women have flourished throughout the United States. In 1935, the Conference of the Dominican Mothers General of America was established for the purpose of affiliation and collaboration and eventually became the Dominican Leadership Conference (presently, the Dominican Sisters Conference). In the 1990’s, the Dominican Leadership Conference fostered movements for deeper collaboration within the branches of the Order.

From these efforts, Dominican women congregations in the northeast section of the United States journeyed through various paths of collaboration that led in 2010 to the creation of the Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration (OPSCC). OPSCC has as its emphasis to deepen contemplation and to do together what could not be done alone. Each congregation is committed to the Dominican mission to proclaim the Word of God, steeped in contemplation, prayer, study and community and the mandate to act on behalf of justice.

Beginning in 2019, the OPSCC member congregations entered into discernment about how to collaborate in governance for the purpose of advancing Dominican life and mission into the future. Such collaboration in governance would enable the congregations to continue to carry out the mission, charism, and care of the members. In April 2019, the following Dominican women congregations agreed to pursue forming the (TITLE TO BE INSERTED AT LATER DATE) Association:

Sisters of St. Dominic, Congregation of the Holy Cross, Amityville, NY

Sisters of St. Dominic of Blauvelt, NY

Sisters of St. Dominic, American Congregation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Caldwell, NJ

Dominican Sisters of Hope, Ossining, NY

Dominican Convent of Our Lady of the Rosary, Sparkill, NY

**II. Purpose of the Association**

The primary purpose of the Association is to provide collaboration in the canonical governance structure of the member congregations in carrying out their mission, charism, and care of the membership. In particular, the Association desires to assist each congregation to remain viable for as long as possible.

**III. Membership**

Membership in the Association is open to all apostolic Dominican women’s congregations according to the procedure prescribed by the Association.

 Member congregations remain autonomous religious institutes as recognized by

 ecclesiastical authority.

Membership in the Association does not change the internal life of each congregation, nor its canonical status as previously established by an ecclesiastical authority.

**IV. Governance**

 **1. Association Chapter**

The Chapter is the highest authority in the Association. The primary tasks of the Association Chapter are to safeguard the Association’s purpose and the election of its leadership. Its Chapter is convoked ordinarily every three years. Delegates to the Association Chapter are chosen by the member congregations.

The Chapter:

* directs and evaluates the purpose and administration of the Association.
* elects the Association’s Leadership.
* issues directives and makes recommendations to be carried out by the

 Association Prioress and Council.

* determines the methods for the administration of the Association’s financial goods.
* considers possible amendments to the Statutes and Directory of the Association
* determines when the next Chapter will take place.

 **2. Association Leadership**

The Prioress and Councilors form the Leadership of the Association and handle the following:

* implements decisions of the Chapter.
* accepts candidate congregations for admission to the Association.
* consults with local leadership of member congregations.
* assists member congregations as requested (e.g. the need for a commissary).
* oversees the exercise of commissary duties of Association members if requested by ecclesial authorities to do so.
* collaborates in the on-going formation of Association members.
* sustains on-going communication with Association members.
* promotes the mission and develops relationships among Association members.
* develops the Association’s administrative policies.
* exercises stewardship over the Association’s resources.

 **3. Association Prioress**

In the Dominican tradition, the Prioress is the first among equals and is accountable to the Chapter.

The Association Prioress:

* presides at meetings of the Association’s Leadership.
* serves as the official representative of the Association.
* serves as the President of the Association’s civil corporation.
* convokes and presides at the Association’s Chapter.
* responds to requests for assistance from member congregations.
* collaborates with member congregations.

The Association Prioress is elected for a term as determined before the election at the Association’s Chapter and can be re-elected for a second term, but not a consecutive third term. Her term is ordinarily three years.

The process of election is as follows:

* For election, an absolute majority of ballots cast by secret ballot on the first, second, and third votes is required.
	+ If no sister receives an absolute majority on the first vote, there shall be a second ballot. If that fails, a third ballot takes place.
	+ If the third ballot does not produce the desired majority, the fourth ballot shall be limited to those two sisters who received the greatest number of votes in the third ballot with the election being decided by simple majority.
	+ Should the fourth ballot result in a tie, drawing of lots shall determine the election.

*Note: the inaugural election will be described in the Directory*

 **4. Association Council**

Councilors assist the Prioress in the governance duties of the Association by:

* providing advice and counsel in accord with the Statutes of the Association and Universal Law of the Church.
* acting in place of the Prioress as needed.
* representing the Association at local and national meetings.
* assisting in administrative duties of the Association as appointed.
	+ advising the Prioress on the needs of member congregations.
	+ deciding the process for subsequent elections.

The Association Councilors are elected for a term as determined before the election at the Association’s Chapter and can be re-elected for another term, but not a consecutive third term. Their term is ordinarily three years.

The Association Council will ordinarily have three councilors who are elected in the following manner:

* For election, an absolute majority of ballots cast by secret ballot on the first, second, and third votes is required.
	+ If no sister receives an absolute majority on the first vote, there shall be a second ballot. If that fails, a third ballot takes place.
	+ If the third ballot does not produce the desired majority, the fourth ballot shall be limited to those two sisters who received the greatest number of votes in the third ballot with the election being decided by simple majority.
	+ Should the fourth ballot result in a tie, drawing of lots shall determine the election.

*Note: the inaugural election will be described in the Directory*

 **5. Association Treasurer**

The Association Prioress, with consent of the Association Council, appoints the Association Treasurer who:

* is responsible for the Association’s assets in accord with civil and canon law.
* administers the resources of the Association under the direction of the Association Prioress and Council.
* recommends actions for stewardship of Association’s assets and investments to the Association Leadership.
* prepares reports on the assets of the Association.
* assists member congregations with asset management as appointed by the Association Leadership.

**6. Local Leaders of Member Congregations**

The elected leadership of each member congregation continues its canonical responsibilities as stated in its individual Constitutions until it decides to transfer some or all of those responsibilities to the Association Leadership. This decision is made with the consent of the Chapter of the given member congregation and, if needed, the appropriate approval of ecclesiastical authorities.

As a member congregation begins to move towards requesting the Association Leadership to take over some of its governance responsibilities, the Association Leadership will take steps to do so.

**V. Commissary**

It is the responsibility of a member congregation to recognize and plan for when it will no longer be able to elect its own leadership or to hold future Chapters. As a member congregation begins to move towards requesting the Association Leadership to take over some or all its canonical governance responsibilities, the Association Leadership will take the necessary steps, jointly with the member congregation, to be ready to assume this role.

A member congregation’s final Chapter needs to give consent for the local leadership to petition its ecclesiastical authority to have the Association Leadership appointed as its Commissary. The Association Leadership, if appointed, will assume the canonical governance for the given member congregation according to its Constitutions.

**VI. Authority to Amend the Statutes and the Directory**

Amendments to the Statutes require a 2/3 majority vote by the Association Chapter and the approval of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CICLSAL).

Amendments to the Directory require a 2/3 majority vote by the Association Chapter.

**Word Bank**

**January 2021**

This Word Bank was developed following the meetings held with leadership and membership in Phase I and II of this project. During Phase III, additional words/terms surfaced that were added to the Word Bank. These terms are meant to be used as a resource in more clearly defining various aspects of establishing an Association for Shared Canonical Governance such as the Statutes.

Two such words/terms, *proper law and commissary,* surfaced again during Phase III. The definitions for these terms can be found in the Word Bank of January 2021. We welcome any additional terms used throughout this document that you feel need further clarification.

**(CICLSAL)** – a department of the Roman Curia in the Vatican responsible for matters related to

 religious life.

**COMMISSARY** -- the Church’s term for a person or entity who is appointed to represent either

the Vatican or a diocesan bishop in a particular matter/situation; at the time of appointment the scope of the duties given to the person or entity is specified.

 --Religious institutes[[1]](#footnote-1) which are no longer able to elect their own leadership can petition

the Vatican (if pontifical) or the bishop (if diocesan) for a commissary to be appointed to serve as their leadership; an institute is free to nominate a particular person/entity for this role but cannot appoint a commissary itself.

**CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC**

**(CICLSAL)** – a department of the Roman Curia in the Vatican responsible for matters related to

 religious life.

**CORPORATION** -- an association of individuals, created by civil law or under the authority of

 the civil law, with a continuous existence independent of the existences of its members,

and powers and liabilities distinct from those of its members.

-- USA civil law requires that canonical entities, including religious institutes, need to set

 up civil corporations to manage their assets and business (this management

includes ordinary and extra-ordinary administration as described below).

-- A non-profit recognized as a 501(c) (3) corporation comes under a particular set of

 civil norms which are beneficial to the work of the non-profit. Ex. a 501(c) (3)

 corporation has tax exemption.

--A religious institute can create additional corporation(s) to handle its ministries; at the

 time setting up a corporation, the institute decides what assets will belong to it;

additional assets can always be added.

**COVENANT** -- in general this is an agreement, usually formal, between two or more persons or

 entities to do or not do something specified.

**CANONICAL COVENANT** -- an agreement between an institute facing serious

 limitations in being able to handle its canonical governance and/or its corporation

 responsibilities (civil management) with another party; this agreement can be

solely for handling civil management (in part or entirely) or can be solely for handling canonical governance or can be for both civil management and canonical governance; when the agreement entails canonical governance the approval of either the Vatican (if pontifical) or of the bishop (if diocesan) is required to be implement it.

*Note: no two canonical covenant agreements are the same for the agreements*

 *are developed to fit the situation of the institute seeking it.*

**ENTITY**-- in general this is something that has a real existence, a thing.

 **CANONICAL ENTITY FOR RELIGIOUS LIFE** -- a way of life formally approved by

 either the Vatican (a pontifical institute) OR the diocesan bishop (a diocesan

 institute within this bishop’s diocese); the three categories of canonical entity for

 religious life recognized in canon law are:

--**RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE** (includes congregations and monasteries) is “…a society in which members, according to proper law, pronounce public vows, either perpetual or temporary which are to be renewed… and lead a life of brothers or sisters in common.” See canons 607-709 for the norms governing this way of religious life.

--**SECULAR INSTITUTE** is way of life in which the members “…living in the world, strive for the perfection of charity and seek to contribute to sanctification of the world, especially from within.” See canons 710-730 for the norms governing this way of religious life.

--**SOCIETY OF APOSTOLIC LIFE** is a way of life, while resembling institutes of consecrated life, in which “…their members without religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to [it] and, leading a life in common as brothers

 and sisters according to their proper manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of constitutions.” See canons 731-746 for the norms governing this way of religious life.

**FEDERATION** -- in general, to provide for spiritual and pastoral support and sharing of ideas a

 group of religious institutes can form a federation; there are two types of federations in

 the Church:

-- Formally approved federation has statutes approved by CICLSAL; if the approved

 statutes specify, the federation leadership can exercise authority over its member

 institutes in some matters.

--Informally approved federation has its statutes created and approved by the membership

 but not sent to CICLSAL for approval; each of the member institutes retains its

full autonomy. Ex. Dominican Federation

**JURIDIC PERSON** -- moral persons or subjects in canon law with obligations and rights which

 correspond to their nature and can exercise juridic acts; see cc. 113-123 for more details;

 sometimes the initials of “PJP” are used when referring to a public juridic person (one

 type of juridic person).

Examples of public juridic persons in the Church:

(a) by nature the Catholic Church and the Apostolic See;

(b) by decree institutes of consecrated life, societies of apostolic life, secular

institutes, dioceses, parishes.

**MANAGEMENT** -- the handling of an institute’s assets and business through its civil corporation(s);

management in canon law is described in two categories:

—**Ordinary Administration** which is the day-to-day operations that do not require special

permission (developing the budget and overseeing it, paying normal bills, making

normal deposit of salary, donation checks, purchase of normal supplies, etc.)

—**Extraordinary Administration** which are operations beyond day-to-day activities

requiring special permission from the leadership. (Ex. this category is where the sale of property is often handled depending on the value of the sale.)

**PATRIMONY OF AN INSTITUTE** —the goods in funds, properties, securities in any form, and

 the spiritual heritage which belong to an institute (its nature, end, spirit and character

according to the intent of the founders and the institute’s sound traditions); the leadership must take special care not to put the institute’s patrimony in unnecessary adverse business situations to avoid destabilizing its way of life.

**PROPER LAW** — this is the document of a particular institute, i.e. the constitutions, that

governs its way of life and binds the members; it has been formally approved by either the CICLSAL or the diocesan bishop.

**SUPPRESSION OF A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE** -- the action by either the diocesan bishop (if

a diocesan institute) or CICLSAL (if a pontifical institute) to terminate the existence of a

religious institute; seldom done except when there are no more members or when

entering into a merger/union.

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**Expanded Word Bank**

**October 2021**

**CANON LAW** (often referred to as the Universal Law of the Catholic Church) -- is the

internal [ecclesiastical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical) law, or operational policy, governing the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church).

-- a [canon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_%28canon_law%29) is a brief statement of a norm approved by the Pope.

**CIVIL LAW** -- is the code of civil laws within a given geographic area; it is gives individuals

and civilly recognized entities obligations and rights, such as allowing everyone the freedom to own property

**COMMON LAW** -- is law that is not written down as legislation and has evolved into a system of

rules based on precedent. This is a rule that guides judges in making later decisions in similar cases. The common law cannot be found in any code or body of legislation, but only in past decisions.

**CRIMINAL LAW** -- is the system of civil law concerned with punishment of those who commit

crimes.

**UNIVERSAL LAW OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH** -- contains the concepts of legal,

legitimate actions, whereby those principles and rules for governing human beings’ conduct which are most universal in their acceptability, their applicability, translation and philosophical basis, are therefore considered to be most legitimate.

-- based on the Code of Canon Law and expanded by any additional Vatican documents

publishes

**COMMISSARY** (in Phase 1; further clarified here) -- Church’s term for a person or entity who is

appointed to represent either the Vatican or a diocesan bishop in a particular matter/situation; at the time of appointment the scope of the duties given to the person or entity is specified.

-- religious congregations which are no longer able to hold chapter and/or elect their own

leadership can petition the Vatican (if pontifical) or the bishop (if diocesan) for a commissary to be appointed to serve as their leadership; an institute is free to nominate a particular person/entity for this role but cannot appoint a commissary itself.

-- specifics on how a congregation prepares for and petitions for the appointment of a

Commissary will be developed by the member congregations working c collaboratively within the Association.

**MAJORITY**

**SIMPLE MAJORITY (OR RELATIVE MAJORITY)** -- is to receive a majority in which

the highest number of votes cast exceeds the second highest number while not constituting an absolute majority

**ABSOLUTE MAJORITY** -- is to receive a vote total that is at least one over half of all the votes

cast.

**MEMBER OF A CONGREGATION OF THE ASSOCIATION** -- a congregation who has canonically

voted (in Chapter) to become a part of the Association

**ORDINARILY** -- an adverb denoting usually, in a normal way, but allows for a variation when necessary

**SHARED CANONICAL GOVERNANCE** -- is a means by which member congregations create

an Entity that elects a Major Canonical Superior and Council and holds a General Chapter. This will enable each member congregation to remain viable until their last member dies.

**TREASURER** -- is a person appointed to administer or manage the financial asset and liabilities

of a society, company, local authority, or body.

-- a position that could be incorporated into the job description of the CFO; could also be

held by a qualified lay person

**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**January 19, 2021**

**Introduction to the FAQ**

The task force has continued to develop responses to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) it receives at meetings held with leadership and membership in Phases I through IV of this project. During each phase, additional questions surfaced and have been added to the FAQ. These answers are meant to be used as a resource to understand the working text of the Association’s Statutes for Shared Canonical Governance.

1. **What is the OPSCC?**

The OPSCC (Dominican Sisters in Committed Collaboration) is a non-canonical structure created by six Dominican congregations of vowed women religious in the Northeast to promote Dominican life and mission.

1. **What Congregations participate in the OPSCC?**

Amityville, Blauvelt, Caldwell, Hope, Maryknoll, Sparkill.

1. **What congregations are considering participating in the Shared Governance Model?**

Amityville, Blauvelt, Caldwell, Hope, Sparkill.

1. **Who are the members of the Task Force?**

One leader and one member from each of the five congregations and the facilitator.

Amityville:  Beth McGarvey and Diane Morgan

Blauvelt:  Terry Rickard and Ellenrita Purcaro

Caldwell:  Lena Picillo and Pat Tavis

Hope:  Catherine Walsh and Pat Magee

Sparkill:  Sheila Brennan and Grace Hogan

Facilitator: Lynn Jarrell, OSU

1. **How did this Task Force come to be?**

The Task Force was called for in the Apr. 11, 2019 statement from the OPSCC leadership and was affirmed by the OPSCC leadership on Sept. 23, 2019. (See Appendix for this statement) They then moved forward to appoint the Task Force which began its work on Nov. 13, 2019.

1. **While we may not be coming together as “one” right now, will this happen eventually?**

Keep in mind the statement from OPSCC leadership in April 2019: “The model will be one in which each participating congregation would maintain its own identity; no merger or union is being considered.”

During the OPSCC process of meeting to discuss shared canonical governance, several factors must be considered: capacity of each congregation to hold Chapter; capacity to elect leadership; management needs; and demographics. The model being proposed will address these realities.

1. **How are we leaning into one another to move into the future?**

This process, including distribution of updates after each Task Force meeting and creation of a shared common prayer, is bringing to the fore the reality and the unknown of moving into shared canonical governance. It may be good to ask members what it is we need to do to have a better sense of knowing each other.

1. **I am a Sister in a local community. How is a shared canonical governance structure going to affect me?**

One way will be to grow in appreciation and understanding of the 5 congregations in OPSCC.

Another way will mean learning how the new structure functions and how we will be in relationship with one another.

1. **When will we be able to talk about a specific model of shared canonical governance?**

Possible models are in draft form and are under revision as the Task Force continues its work. The plan is that during October the draft model(s) will be presented to membership and leadership for consideration and input.

1. **Will we be able to retain some practices of our own congregations such as jubilees, wakes & funerals?**

Initially each congregation will maintain its traditions regarding celebrations of jubilees, wakes and funerals. As collaboration continues and we learn from each other, leadership and membership can discern desired changes.

1. **Who will be responsible for oversight of the sponsored ministries?**

That depends upon the governance structure that is in place for each of the sponsored ministries as well as the governance structure created for the new Entity. Much of this is not yet worked out. What is clear is the creation of a new Entity for shared canonical governance does not mean that anything automatically must happen with the sponsored ministries.

1. **If a congregation has a province or another region, how will this affect the process of moving into shared canonical governance?**

The structure and proper law of the province or region will have to be considered in relation to the congregation. If there are questions, they need to be addressed before the shared governance model is adopted by a congregation.

1. **How do we understand the question of “capacity” related to our members?**

Members need sufficient comprehension of the matters under consideration, the willingness to study difficult questions openly, and the ability to deal with complex issues.

1. **Are there congregations beginning to create a shared governance model?**

As included in the Introduction to this document, 9 religious congregations formed the Wisconsin Religious Collaborative for the purpose of sharing resources and professional expertise in finance, management, pastoral care, governance, and other areas in order to sustain mission and meet the needs of individual religious institutes in Wisconsin and their members. Shared canonical governance has not yet been addressed.

1. **What information is available regarding our demographics?**

 This journey to shared canonical governance is motivated by our desire to foster

 Dominican life and mission. This desire includes realization of our demographics. Please

 see the Appendix for U.S. Dominican Sisters Census Profiles 2020-2040. The graphics

indicate Sisters over/under 70 years of age in the US Dominican women’s congregations.

1. **How will the model of shared canonical governance be implemented?**

 The OPSCC leadership will determine the process of implementation.

1. **Why is the Association a canonical model and not a civil one?**

The Task Force was charged by the OPSCC Leadership to create a shared canonical governance model. Being a civil entity solely will not address the OPSCC Leaders’ desired end of addressing the call for developing shared canonical governance among its member congregations. To address this call requires establishing a canonical model for shared governance. The reason this charge calls for the creation of a canonical model is that every congregation in the OPSCC has been established as a canonical entity. It is essential that the shared governance model enjoy the same status with its privileges and protections as our individual congregations have since our founding.

Because we are aware of smaller potential leadership pools, one of the duties the Association would be to have the ability, if the need arises, to assume the canonical leadership of one or more of its member congregations. In order to be appointed as the Commissary for these member congregations, the Association needs to have been established as a canonical entity.

The Association will also need to be a civil corporation, often referred to as a 501c3 entity in USA civil law, since it will be conducting business within the USA and have assets. Also, it may be asked by a member congregation to manage its assets. However, the Association’s civil corporation will be independent of the civil corporations the member congregations have set up.

The major benefits for the Association being canonically recognized include:

* Recognition as having Catholic Identity and as part of the public life of the Church
* Acknowledgement of its mission centricity within the works of the Church and the world
* Expression of a collective prophetic voice in the Church speaking truth to power
* Canonical entities in the United Stated are granted tax exemption status for their civil corporation
* Eligibility for the Association to petition to be appointed the Commissary for individual member congregations if the need arises
* Establishment of an approved entity in which the member congregations can plan collaboratively and provide for their future as they continue to evolve
1. **Will the Association have a governing document?**

Yes, the congregations founding the Association will draft its governing document called Statutes which will need to be approved by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life [CICLSAL] at the Vatican. The approved Statutes will describe the purpose of the Association and the scope of responsibilities its Leadership has.

1. **How will the Association Leadership be chosen?**

The makeup of the Association Leadership will be described in the Association’s governing document (its Statutes). For example, it is possible that at the beginning the Association’s Prioress and four councilors will be chosen by the member congregations. Each congregation will determine how and who is chosen from their congregation to serve on this first Leadership. The Association Prioress may be elected by the member congregations or chosen by the five who are elected to its Leadership. Then, following the first selection of Leadership, the Association may decide to keep the selection of its next Leadership the same or to revise it. The particulars on the selection of the Association Leadership will be worked out by the member congregations as they draft the governing document.

1. **What will be the scope of authority of the different levels of Leadership within the Association and its member congregations?**

Initially the Association Leadership will possibly function more as a coordinating group much as the present Core Committee of OPSCC functions. For example, they could be given the responsibilities to oversee the Justice Office, the grant process, and ongoing formation activities. The Association Leadership would always have the responsibility to urge the member congregations to pay attention to any changes occurring in their capacities to handle their governing duties and ask the Association for assistance if needed.

Local leaders (*the elected leadership of each congregation*) continue their canonical responsibilities as stated in their individual Constitutions until they would decide to give some and/or all of these to the Association Leadership. If a member congregation begins to move towards needing to request the Association Leadership to take over some of its Local Leadership responsibilities, the Association Leadership will have to organize itself to do so. For example, through a mutual agreement between the requesting member congregation and the Association, the authority for specific areas in a member congregation would be transferred to the Association Leadership as of a certain date.

1. **Will the Association be a Pontifical or a Diocesan Entity?**

The Association will need the approval of CICLSAL to make it a pontifical entity since it will have a number of member congregations. However, each member congregation remains as it was founded, either pontifical or diocesan.

Each of the diocesan member congregations may need either the approval or at least the input of its diocesan bishop to join the Association. Since the Association will be a pontifical entity, membership in it will provide the diocesan congregations an additional protection from their diocesan bishops entering into their affairs should that be needed in the future.

1. **Does joining the Association impact the assets of each member congregation?**

The assets of each member congregation remain fully with that congregation. Membership in the Association does not change this. Each member congregation has the right and duty to determine how its assets are to be used and even how they are to be dispersed whenever its members no longer need them.

1. **What happens to the Associates of a member congregation when it joins the Association?**

Associates of a member congregation remain with their congregation and will function according to how each member congregation has them functioning. This is true even if a member congregation needs to request that the Association Leadership be named its commissary.

1. **Does the appointment of a Commissary need canonical permission?**

Commissary is the Church’s term for a person or entity who is appointed to represent either the Vatican or a diocesan bishop in a particular matter/situation. At the time of appointment, the scope of the duties given to the person or entity is specified.

Religious institutes which are no longer able to elect their own Leadership can petition the Vatican (if pontifical) or the bishop (if diocesan) for their governing authority to be suspended *(this means no longer hold chapter and elect leadership*) and to have a commissary appointed to serve as their Leadership. An institute is free to nominate a particular person/entity for this role but cannot appoint its own commissary.

A member congregation would be able to petition CICLSAL or its diocesan bishop that the Association’s Leadership be appointed as its commissary.

1. **Can a congregation join the Association later or do all congregations desiring to be members of the Association have to join at same time?**

Only those congregations who choose to be part of founding the Association will be able to shape it from the ground up. This means that the spirit and structure of the Association will be in the hands of the foundering members.

After foundation should a congregation approach the Association seeking to become a member, the Association will have a process for weighing this request. There is no obligation that the Association must agree to admit a new congregation even if it is of the same spiritual family.

1. **Why may each member congregation need to amend its constitutions to join the Association?**

This is not a black-white issue, meaning one size does not fit all the member congregations. Keep in mind that since the Association is a vehicle of shared canonical governance and the constitutions of each member congregation need to permit this to happen.

At the beginning of the Association, it will depend on the content of each member congregation’s constitutions whether anything needs to be amended to join the Association. For example, the Association may decide that would be beneficial for all its member congregations to be on the same cycle for holding their chapters, length of their terms of office, and whether or not Local Leadership can serve two consecutive terms of office. If this is decided, member congregations may need to amend their constitutions on these matters. Or, if the Association would begin to assume more responsibilities of canonical governance for one of the member congregations, its constitutions may need to be amended to allow for this transfer of authority.

**Expanded Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

 **October 13, 2021**

1. **Why are there ordinarily three councilors after the first election?**

The draft Statutes allow for the Association Chapter to determine the number of councilors. As the number of vowed members of each member congregation decreases, it may be determined a smaller number serving in the Association leadership can meet the needs of the member congregations.

1. **What are the Association’s financial goods?**

That is to be determined. Initially, if it is decided that member congregations pay dues to belong to the Association, that would be the beginning of the Association’s finances.

1. **Can someone in the leadership of a member congregation serve in the leadership of the Association?**

Yes, unless stated otherwise in the Statutes or Directory.

1. **Could the Association Leadership call an extraordinary chapter?**

The Association Prioress and Council have the authority to convene an Extraordinary Chapter if deemed necessary.

**Expanded Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**Updated December 20, 2021**

1. **How does a member congregation determine the appropriate time to choose a commissary?**

A member congregation needs to petition CICLSAL or its Bishop/Cardinal to appoint a commissary when it is no longer able to elect its own leadership. The member congregation may recommend that the Association leadership be appointed as its commissary, but it is the role of the CICLSAL/Bishop/Cardinal to name the commissary.

1. **Can the ecclesiastical authority say “NO” (not approve) to a recommendation by a member congregation to appoint the Association as its commissary?**

Yes, but there is no example of such a refusal of any congregation’s recommendation for whom to appoint as its commissary happening. The pattern has been that the ecclesiastical authority is in agreement with any congregation’s recommendation if the appropriate explanation is provided.

1. **Can the ecclesiastical authority take control of a congregation’s leadership and/or finances?**

The proper ecclesiastical authority could only take control of a congregation’s leadership or finances if there is a serious violation of that congregation’s Constitutions or canon law. For this to happen the proper ecclesiastical authority should inform a congregation of its violation and allowed appropriate time to correct the matter.

1. **Is it required that whoever is appointed as a commissary has to be familiar with religious life?**

Up to this point CICLSAL has only appointed a religious, a religious congregation, a bishop, or priest to serve as a commissary of a congregation, stating that a lay person cannot serve in this role.

1. **What happens to a member congregation’s archives if it petitions that the Association be appointed its commissary?**

If a member congregation requests assistance with its archives from the Association prior to needing to petition for a commissary, the Association will provide the assistance requested. A member congregation will be urged to make long-term arrangements for the future of its archives prior to petitioning for a commissary. Otherwise, once the Association is in the role of commissary for a member congregation, it will need to make the necessary decisions about the archives honoring as much as possible the preference of the given member congregation.

1. **On what matters connected to the Association does a member congregation need to seek the approval of its ecclesiastical authority?**

There is no approval from its ecclesiastical authority needed to join the Association. A member congregation only needs the approval of its ecclesiastical authority to:

* Make changes in its Constitutions, after the consent of its Chapter, which might be required for membership by the Association’s Statutes or Chapter Acts

Note: such changes will depend on the wording of its Constitutions and could possibly not be necessary for a given congregation

* Transfer one or more critical civil and/or canonical responsibilities to the Association to handle if such approval is required by its Constitutions,

Note: It will depend on what is prescribed in its Constitutions whether the decision to make the transfer of such a civil and/or canonical responsibility needs first the consent of its Chapter or not.

* Petition made by an affirmative vote of its Chapter for the Association to be appointed its commissary.
1. **Will there be some type of representation for Associates and Dominican Youth in the Association?**

Member congregations are free to continue their current relationships with their Associates and Dominican Youth. It is envisioned that these two groups will remain connected to the member congregations where they make their initial commitment/ affiliation. Also, it expected that the current interaction of these two groups across the OPSCC congregations will continue and not be alter by the Association being set up.



**Phase V Timeline**

**January 19 to late March 2022**

***Seeking Congregational Leanings to accept the Working Text of the Association Statutes***

 ***and to send them to the Vatican Office for Religious***

**January 19, 2022:** Letter to describe Phase V and distribute Phase IV packet sent to membership

* Diane drafts letter to members and the TF will review it
* Catherine oversees final corrections in Working Text of Statutes

**January 26, 2022:** Podcast by Catherine – distribute and post on OPSCC website

* Website: opjustice.org - Member Page - Password – Veritas
* Hard copies of podcast’s script made available if needed.

**February to late March 2022:** Membership Leaning on Working Text of the Association Statutes

* Ellenrita collects the date of the Congregations’ leaning by early February
* Members’ consideration of the Working Text of the Association Statutes and accompanying materials
	+ Study, discuss and pray over the materials sent out with letter on January 19
	+ Discuss questions/concerns on the Working Text of the Association Statutes with TF member(s) if needed
	+ use congregational zoom meetings if deemed necessary.
* Reflect on the following question:

*Am I willing to affirm sending the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the Vatican Office for Religious for review and approval?*

* **No later than March 16:** Congregational gatherings of members to give their leanings in response to the question below:
	+ Each congregation can decide how they will conduct its Leaning
	+ However, in its leaning, every congregation must use this question exactly as worded:

*Are we, the Dominican Sisters of (insert congregation’s name), willing to affirm sending the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the Vatican Office for Religious for review and approval?*

* Congregations may include the leaning of any member not able to be present at the gathering in which the leaning is taken
* **By March 25:** Each congregation asked to submit in writing to Catherine the results of its leaning, providing percentage of participating members that said “yes” or gave an “affirmative” to the question above
* **By late March 2022:**
* Letter, written by Catherine, to the leadership/membership announcing results of the leanings of the 5 OPSCCC congregations
* Letter, written by Catherine, to the leadership of the congregations who approved sending the Working Text of the Association Statutes to the Vatican Office for Religious, asking them to carry out this decision.

*Note: With these two letters sent, Phase V is finished. In Phase VI, Lynn is willing to assist the leadership in preparing the letter and getting the packet delivered to the Vatican.*

1. The word “institute” is the umbrella term used in this listing for the various types of religious entities for living religious life described in the Church’s canon law. You are welcome to substitute “congregation” for “institute” as you move through the list since the OPSCC is made up of congregations, one that is pontifical and four that are diocesan. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)