

## THE SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS

# The Constitution

### Preamble

- 1.1 The Society of Saint Francis came into being in 1937 at Cerne Abbas, Dorset, England, from the amalgamation of The Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Assisi with The Brotherhood of the Love of Christ, to form The First Order of the Society of Saint Francis.
- 1.2 In 1967, this First Order united with the corresponding community in the Episcopal Church in the United States of America, The Order of Saint Francis, which had been founded in 1919 (under the name of The Order of the Poor Brethren of Saint Francis of the American Congregation of Saint Francis).
- 1.3 Since 1964, the sisters of The Community of Saint Francis, founded in 1905, have formed a constituent part of the Society and, in 1973, were recognised as The Sisters of the First Order of the Society of Saint Francis.
- 1.4 The Second Order of the Society has been comprised of two sisterhoods: since its foundation in 1947 in England, the enclosed Community of Saint Clare and from 1969 until its demise in 2000 a corresponding community in the United States of America, the Order of Poor Clares of Reparation, founded in 1922. From 1996 until it disbanded in 1999 the Clare Community in Australia was recognized as a community of the Second Order in formation.
- 1.5 The Third Order, for men and women in secular life, came into being when the first Franciscan communities were founded in the different parts of the Anglican Communion. The Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis has been in existence since the Society's own inception.

### Definitions

- 2.1 The Society of Saint Francis comprises:  
The Brothers of the First Order;  
The Sisters of the First Order;  
The Sisters of the Second Order;  
The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order.
- 2.2 The Brothers of the First Order are called The Society of Saint Francis (SSF). The Sisters of the First Order are called The Community of Saint Francis (CSF). The members of the Second Order are called The Community of Saint Clare (OSC). The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order are called The Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis (TSSF).

## **Government**

- 3.1 A Protector General of the whole Society shall be elected from among the Provincial Bishops Protector by a joint meeting of the First Order Chapters, after consultation with the Second Order and the Third Order.
- 3.2 The work and government of the Society of Saint Francis as a whole shall be under the Protector General's supervision.
- 3.3 Each constituent part of the Society is governed by its own Constitution, Statutes, and Chapters, and by those called to administer its Rule in the service of the Society.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the Ministers General of the First Order, the Abbess of the Second Order, and the Minister General of the Third Order jointly to maintain the unity of the Society. They shall choose from among themselves a Convener for a period of three years, or until the member ceases to hold qualifying office, whichever is the shorter, and may be re-elected. The Convener shall call the group together from time to time as need arises. If unable to meet, their business shall be conducted by correspondence.
- 3.5 It is the responsibility of the Minister Provincial of the First Order Brothers, the Minister Provincial of the First Order Sisters, the Abbess of the Second Order, and the Minister Provincial of the Third Order jointly to maintain the unity of the Society in their Province.

## **Finance**

- 4.1 No funds are held specifically within, or corporately by, The Society of Saint Francis. The constituent parts of The Society are individually responsible for their financial and economic operations.

## **Patrons**

- 5.1 The Society places itself under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Saint Francis of Assisi, and of Saint Clare of Assisi. Their festivals shall be observed with special devotion.

## **Changes to the Constitution**

- 6.1 This Constitution may be amended by the agreement of the constituent parts of the Society of Saint Francis, such agreement signified to the Convener.

*This text was ratified by the constituent parts of The Society of Saint Francis in 1998 and includes amendments adopted in 2001.*