



## Cluster: a dominican journey in faith

### OPTIONS FOR RECONFIGURATION OF DOMINICAN CLUSTER CONGREGATIONS

#### INTRODUCTION

*“In the beginning was the Word . . .”* (John 1:1)

Over long months, we have spoken words with one another, sharing from the depths of our hearts. Here is some of what we said about *why* we want to reconfigure:

MISSION is the priority, the passion, the flame for reconfiguration.

- We want to be able to speak truth publicly with one voice.
- We want to be on the margins, in the places of most need.
- We want to be credible and relevant to the needs of these times.
- We want to strengthen our connections with the internationality of the Order.
- We want to take responsibility for the future of Dominican mission.
- We want to nourish and mentor new life.

In what we create for the future, we want to be able to challenge ourselves and one another to:

- balance structure, spirit, action and contemplation;
- put the common good before our own;
- live sustainably and simply in all aspects of our life;
- cherish all forms of cultural diversity among us: rural and urban, ethnic, geographical, and the unique culture of each congregation;
- strengthen relationships, thinking of one another as family, not guests;
- take risks to achieve our goals.

## OPTIONS

| <i><b>CANONICAL FEDERATION</b></i>  | <i><b>CANONICAL UNION</b></i>   |
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| <p><b><u>I. Description</u></b><br/>                     Seven congregations form a canonical federation<sup>1</sup> whose purpose is to consolidate and renew Dominican mission for the future. The <b>Canonical Federation</b> has its own name, identity, statutes, and corporate legal structure.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The seven congregations retain their autonomy as canonical congregations.</i><sup>2,3</sup></p>   | <p><b><u>I. Description</u></b><br/>                     Seven congregations form one congregation, a canonical union,<sup>1</sup> whose purpose is to consolidate and renew Dominican life for the future. The <b>Canonical Union</b> has its own name, pontifical identity, constitution, and corporate legal structure.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The seven congregations relinquish their autonomy to form a new pontifical canonical institute.</i></p>  |
| <p><b><u>II. Roles and Responsibilities</u></b><br/>                     The following must be <b>retained by the congregations</b> of the Canonical Federation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Initial Formation</li> <li>2. Sponsored ministries UNLESS alienated and transferred to the Canonical Federation</li> <li>3. All temporal goods including socially responsible investments</li> </ol> <p>The following may be <b>transferred</b> to the Canonical Federation:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vocation ministry</li> <li>2. On-going formation</li> <li>3. Sharing health care facilities for members needing skilled care, assisted living, etc. These members remain under the authority of their congregational leadership</li> <li>4. Encouraging the development of new ministries or new expressions of Dominican mission</li> <li>5. Federation Leadership with delegated authority may represent the member Congregations at Dominican organizations such as Dominican Sisters International, Dominican Leadership Conference, US Dominican Secretariat, Dominican Sisters USA, Dominican Volunteers</li> </ol> | <p><b><u>II. Roles and Responsibilities</u></b><br/>                     The roles and responsibilities of the Canonical Union are governed by the <u>Code of Canon Law</u>, Book II, Part III, Institutes of Consecrated Life, specifically</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Governance of institutes</li> <li>2. Chapters</li> <li>3. Temporal goods and their administration</li> <li>4. Formation, initial and on-going</li> <li>5. Obligations and rights of institutes and their members                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Community life, spiritual and physical needs of sisters</li> <li>b. Health care facilities for those needing skilled care and/or assisted living</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. The development of ministries in response to the needs of church and society.</li> </ol> |

<sup>1</sup> Canon 582 Mergers and unions of institutes of consecrated life are reserved to the Apostolic See alone; confederations and federations are also reserved to it.

<sup>2</sup> Canon 578 The intention of the founders and their determination concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute which have been ratified by competent ecclesiastical authority as well as its wholesome traditions, all of which constitute the patrimony of the institute itself, are to be observed faithfully by all

<sup>3</sup> Canon 586 §1 For individual institutes there is acknowledged a rightful autonomy of life, specially of governance by which they enjoy their own discipline in the Church and have the power to preserve their own patrimony as mentioned in canon 578.

### **III. Structure**

#### **A. Federation Leadership**

1. Leadership is elected by the Canonical Federation Assembly. Delegates to the Assembly are all those who choose to meet the conditions for participation that are spelled out in the Canonical Federation documents. Ordinarily each member congregation will be represented by at least 1/3 of its members.
2. The Leadership is comprised of five (5) sisters, the Federation Prioress and four Federation Councilors, who provide leadership of the Federation between Federation Assemblies.
3. The term of office is five (5) years with the possibility of a second term of five (5) years.
4. The Leadership Team will serve full-time or part-time as discerned among the Leadership Team.
5. The location of the Canonical Federation central office will be determined in consultation with the leadership of the seven congregations.

#### **B. Staff**

1. Federation staff will be determined by the structure of the Canonical Federation and the roles and responsibilities transferred to the Canonical Federation.
2. Federation staff members are accountable to the Federation Leadership Team.
3. Federation committees may be established and/or suppressed by the Federation Leadership.
4. Personnel of each of the individual seven congregations may be adjusted after determining which roles and responsibilities will be transferred to the Canonical Federation.

### **III. Structure**

#### **A. Central Leadership**

1. Leadership is elected by the Chapter, the highest legislative body of the congregation, that is convoked according to the Constitution of the Congregation. Delegates are those professed sisters who choose to participate according to the Constitution and Directives of the Congregation.
2. The Leadership is comprised of the Prioress General and Councilors as determined by the Constitution.
3. The term of office is “x” years with the possibility of election to a second term of “x” years as determined by the Constitution.
4. The Leadership Team will serve full-time or part-time as discerned by the Leadership Team.
5. The location of the Congregational central office will be determined by the Leadership Team

#### **B. Staff**

1. Central staff is appointed by the Prioress and Council for a specific term of office that may be renewed.
2. Staff positions are: Formation/Vocation Personnel, Treasurer, Congregational Secretary and Archivist. There may also be Promoters for Preaching, Care of the Earth and Justice. Other offices may be established as needed, i.e. Communications, Retirement, Associates, etc.
3. Staff positions/committees may be established or suppressed by the Leadership Team.
4. Staff members are accountable to the Prioress and Council as described in the Congregation’s Directives and/or Policies.

**C. Relationship among Federation Leadership, Congregational Leadership and Membership**

1. The responsibility and authority assigned to the Canonical Federation belong to the Federation Leadership Team; each Congregation retains its responsibility and authority as defined in canon law.
2. Communication between Federation Leadership and each Congregation is essential to a healthy life-giving structure.

**E. Finances**

Funding for the Canonical Federation will be provided through an annual assessment from each member Congregation.

**F. Local Communities**

1. The formation of local communities belongs to each member Congregation.
2. Inter-congregational communities may be formed with the consultation of appropriate authorities. The sisters in an inter-congregational community share a common life but remain accountable to the leadership of the Congregation of which they are a member.

**C. Regions**

1. The General Chapter will determine whether or not regions will be a part of the structure of the Congregation.
2. A region is a gathering of Sisters into smaller units whose purpose is to encourage and support Dominican mission: to praise, to bless and to preach through communal prayer, study, community life and ministry.
3. Regional Leadership would be accountable to the Prioress and Council.

**E. Finances**

All assets of member congregations are transferred to the new Congregation.

**F. Local Communities**

1. In consultation with appropriate authority, individual members form local communities.
2. Members of each local community are responsible for the quality of community life and are accountable to each other and to the Prioress and Council in those matters specified by the documents of the Congregation.

#### **IV. IMPLICATIONS**

1. Requires significant investment of time and talent by leadership and members to meet and create federation structure and documents.
2. Creates a new possibility to energize and deepen the renewal of Dominican life and mission in the member congregations.
3. Maximizes potential for both diversity and communion.
4. Adds another layer of leadership
5. Builds communion among the seven congregations in a gradual and organic way
6. Requires clarity in delineation of roles/responsibilities of federation leadership and congregational leadership
7. Does not seem to address the needs of several Cluster Congregations.
8. Other...

#### **IV. IMPLICATIONS**

1. Calls for energy and time to actualize the vision.
2. Increases corporate Dominican identity, offering a new opportunity for creativity in the preaching mission.
3. Fosters new energy and creativity with diverse cultures and expanded membership.
4. Reduces the number of members needed for leadership and internal ministries.
5. Generates opportunities for a stronger prophetic voice and more visible witness to Dominican life and mission.
6. Increases opportunities for peer relationships.
7. Other...

**V. STEPS IN PROCESS TOWARD CANONICAL FEDERATION**

1. Completion of Cluster Cycles after which Congregational Leadership Teams present a final structure for decision-making by each Congregational Chapter.
2. Representative committee and canonical consultants draft Federation documents
3. Congregations review documents and offer revisions
4. Representative Committee revises Federation documents.
5. First Federation Assembly approves documents and elects Federation Leadership.
6. Federation documents sent to Rome for review/approval.
7. Federation Leadership is installed and site is selected for central office.

**ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE IS JUNE 2008**

*Since there is no change in the canonical status of the congregation in the Canonical Federation, there is no change in the status of individual sisters.*

**V. STEPS IN THE PROCESS TOWARD CANONICAL UNION**

1. Completion of Cluster Cycles after which Congregational Leadership Teams present a final structure for decision-making by each Congregational Chapter.
2. After the Chapter decision, each sister will make her decision regarding membership in the new congregation. \*
3. Leadership appoints a transition team to prepare for the Canonical Union.
4. Leadership initiates conversation and process for the collapse of internal ministries.
5. Rituals are designed to begin the process of letting go and embracing what is to come.
6. Leadership selects a team that will create a draft of the Constitution for the new congregation.
7. After approval by each congregation, the draft of the new Constitution will be sent to Rome for tentative approval.
8. Each congregation begins the process for dissolution.
9. At the first General Chapter of the new congregation the Constitution is approved, a new name is selected, and the new leadership is elected.
10. New leadership takes office.

**ESTIMATED COMPLETION DATE IS JUNE 2010**

*\*According to Canon Law at the time of union, individual sisters are required to discern their choice:  
1 – to join the new congregation  
2 – to transfer to another congregation  
3 – to seek a dispensation from vows.*