

Canonical Federation

Description

Institutes sharing the same nature and spirit join together for common purposes while each institute retains its autonomy. Federation is a higher level legal entity with each institute retaining its current legal existence and its professed members “as is.”

The new juridic person that is formed is comprised of the various institutes, not the members of the institute. It has its own legal identity and functions and officers according to its own statutes; but those in governance positions in a federation do not have legal authority within the institutes that comprise it.

- All six congregations would retain their own constitutions
- All six congregations would retain their own Prioress/President
- Approval is reserved to the Apostolic See through the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.
- There is no suppression of any congregation

Congregations form a canonical federation whose purpose is to consolidate and renew Dominican life and mission for the future. The Canonical Federation has its own name, identity, statutes, and corporate legal structure. The congregations retain their autonomy as canonical congregations.*

Components and Relationships

A canonical federation builds on relationships which is the core of the new structure.

It protects the diversity of congregational cultures, traditions, identities*

It establishes structures for better collaboration and sharing the expertise available to the member congregations in areas of vocation/formation, peace, justice, care of creation, preaching, education, study, ministry, sponsored ministries, financial and property issues, health and retirement issues.*

It may take corporate stances on critical justice issues. May sponsor retreats or study days for members as well as a convocation at regular intervals*

A canonical federation would draw up a charter and by-laws to be approved by members.*

Leadership

The six congregations maintain their own government structures, including chapters and leadership teams.

The Federation Leadership Team can be composed of one representative from each of the congregational leadership teams. The Federation Leadership Team elects its own officers, which become the officers of the civil corporation.*

Implications (Strengths, Limitations)

Strengths:

1. Each congregation retains its own autonomy but shares spirit and gifts of one another*
2. Provides for deeper collaboration among member congregations
3. Will allow energies used in Membership Meetings to be directed toward enhancing Dominican mission
4. Possibility of fewer members in congregational positions due to shared expertise, e.g. Vocation Director, Justice Promoter
5. Embraces charism, mission, values
6. Allows for relationship among members to develop
7. Allows for organic growth and structural communion while allowing for individual differences. Congregations who wish to or may need to unite sooner may do so while those who do not can remain with the Federation

Limitations:

1. Federation leadership team adds another level of leadership
2. A federation might duplicate the purposes and activities of Dominicans USA*
3. A federation does not address diminishing congregations, financial and property issues, problems of aging members*
4. A member of each leadership team will have to devote more time and energy to establish and nurture the federation*

*adapted from the Cluster Congregations, 2006