



*Brothers & Sisters of St. Francis Region*

*Alabama • Georgia • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee*

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## **The FOUR PILLARS of BSSF Region**

(For Members of the Formation Team)

### **SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION, FRATERNITY, APOSTOLATE**

A Trinitarian approach ... by admitting the power of God as Three Persons working in concert, each supporting the other, confirming the other, working with unstinted energy, sacrificing for and with the other for the good, the truth, the peace and wholeness of the community, now in faith we embrace Him as mentor and His way as model. Reflecting how Francis invited the Friars to participate in the mission and ministry ... Using the umbrella of Penance ... self-denial, selflessness, rooting out that which would impede the goal of peace. He invited each one to share the vision and work to achieve its goal.

It is God's inspiration, it is Francis' life and energy as model and mentor ... we move from the divine to the human ... from God to Francis ... whether we be 1st, 2nd or Secular Order ... it is Francis who is the conduit of God's grace ... He, Francis, has shown that it is possible to achieve. He, by virtue of employing the grace given, leads to transformation.

Our region expresses this approach in the Four Pillars, which is a foundation of our Secular Franciscan way of life. These pillars are Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity, and Apostolate. The questions are - what are the pillars; how do they relate to each other; and how do I live them in an authentic Franciscan manner?

The interplay among the Four Pillars addresses the content, the approach, the living, and the sharing of the Secular Franciscan life. The various pieces which constitute the Spirituality Pillar are aimed at providing the materials for a Franciscan identity and mindset; with this material, the Formation Pillar is intended to mold and shape the individual progressively throughout Orientation, Initial Formation, and Ongoing Formation; the Fraternity Pillar is the interactive piece aimed at living the formed spirituality with those who are on the same journey; the Apostolate Pillar has a twofold intent ... working with and for ... working with fellow Franciscans in a cooperative, collaborative, manner respecting the gifts and person of each member of the group ... the service rendered is a Gospel response, in and of itself laudable, yet the added factor is this service is done by a group who is 'of one mind and one heart' ... a seamless garment if you will ... communicating an example of the early Christian community. In fraternity the ideal is to recognize the gifts God provides in sisters and brothers, forging a bond and this community of sisters and brothers simultaneously ministering not only to the needs of others but also witnessing to the Franciscan identity by the manner in which the ministry is dispensed.

The Four Pillars give us developed focus to live authentically *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*.

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this:  
to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint  
Francis of  
Assisi,  
who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.  
Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the  
Holy Spirit leads us,  
and the life which he has come to give abundantly.  
Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the  
gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.

The Rule: Article 4

## **SPIRITUALITY PILLAR**

The Spirituality Pillar is the heart of the Four Pillars. The quality of spiritual growth and the anchoring of a charism demand the interacting of knowledge and a discipline. When one becomes knowledgeable of a particular way, there is the attending need to integrate through measured practice the identifying elements of that spirituality. The practice of the knowledge more deeply roots the elements that transform. Thus, the information seeks to form. With formation in a particular spirituality a recognizable transformation occurs. Embracing our Franciscan spirituality and its attending Pillars requires an ongoing dynamic attentiveness and application. Being attentive reflects the desire; pursuing the application reflects the fire.

Prayer and contemplation must anchor the Spirituality Pillar. It is the means to being attentive and pursuing the application of our Franciscan spirituality on a daily basis. Our quest is to nourish and make strong the Spirit of God within us. We realize this internal quest through the external stimulus of prayer. Prayer, being the lifting of the heart and mind to God, establishes the direction in which we as a whole person are to go. If there is quality and sincerity in private prayer, it extends to communal prayer and there will be life-giving worship. On the other hand, if there is rote recitation lacking spirit and vibrancy, then there is no prayer. Whatever prayer mode we engage - personal, communal, spontaneous or formulary - do it with vibrancy and spirit that truly engages the Almighty.

## **FORMATION PILLAR**

Formation is the vehicle whereby we learn to internalize and integrate the Spirituality, Fraternity, and Apostolate Pillars into every aspect of our lives. It informs, forms, and ultimately helps to transform us. During the formation process, information serves to give insight, to understand, and to practice an authentic Franciscan way of life. This gives way to an internalized and integrated facet of the Franciscan way of life. Ultimately, with time and

application, there is a transformation. Formation serves to direct us to identify and utilize our time, our talent, and our resources in this lifelong process.

We will address Orientation, Initial Formation, and Ongoing Formation by way of The Four Pillars. Present formation programs already include the Four Pillars. By identifying the pillars, we can then make them concrete and a visible “game plan” on which to focus our formation. By highlighting the Four Pillars, we hope to give local formation directors a “total plan” that can increase and enrich local formation programs.

The intent of addressing Orientation and Initial formation by the Four Pillars is to promote uniformity and consistency in our formation and unity in our region. Our goal is to promote optimum formation and a firm foundation to live our Secular Franciscan way of life by giving guidance. We seek to move from a time framed consideration to a reality lived mode of formation. When an Orientee or Inquirer along with those responsible for evaluation believe that h/she is ready to move to the next phase of formation then and only then should that individual enter the next phase. They should have acquired and demonstrated a certain level of facility in living the Four Pillars. Becoming obvious in these last statements, our formation is becoming more personal and individual rather than communal and class. This addresses two realities. Class approaches usually indicate certain and uniform time frames of beginning and ending. Thus, the expectation is to have a designated ending. We know from experience that individual human spirits do not operate on such timetables. For an individual to truly internalize and integrate elements of a way of life that calls for a transformation is to realize that this transformation does not happen on a prescribed timetable. What is the objective of our formation program? Is not its objective to have the individuals both internalize and integrate the four basic elements of our Franciscan life? Accepting these facts of time and intent we remove the burden of having to “make ready the product” in a prescribed timeframe.

The formation director and team are responsible for Initial Formation. Ongoing formation is the domain of the council. Certain individuals are responsible for formation. Yes, but formation is the privilege and responsibility of the entire fraternity or group. We suggest that every member of the fraternity, including Candidates prepare, present, and facilitate Franciscan teachings for Ongoing Formation. Encourage the Inquirers and Candidates to share their formation experiences. This is an opportunity for the fraternity to discern if these individuals can live the Secular Franciscan way of life within this fraternity. In addition, it is an opportunity for the Inquirer or Candidate to discern if the Secular Franciscan way of life is for them.

## **FRATERNITY PILLAR**

Community life! It depends to whom you talk. Each one has his or her idea of community life. However, as a Franciscan and within a Franciscan framework there is clarity as to what is community. It is to pray together, to learn, to serve, and to grow as members within a particular spirituality and lifestyle. Our living life in fraternity calls us to attend to the interpersonal aspects of our life together. We are called to speak the truth in love, i.e., in the love of Christ and the spirit of Francis and Clare. We are encouraged to dialogue and brainstorm regarding each one’s expectations, hopes, and vision for the fraternity. We can sift among these pieces to find the common elements for the “good of the fraternity” rather than promoting one’s individual agenda.

The Franciscan model for fraternity life is the Trinity. Those who make up a fraternity establish a brotherhood, a community of equals among themselves with the Holy Spirit as their Minister General. Fraternity is the basic cell of the Order where we endeavor to live our lives in today's world by going from gospel to life and life to the gospel, while remaining faithful to the conditions of our secular state. Together we strive to overcome the attachments of our false selves and seek to find our fulfillment in God alone. Respecting and encouraging each other's gifts and uniqueness helps shape a fraternity that builds a more fraternal world and gives witness to the kingdom of God.

## **APOSTOLATE PILLAR**

Keep in mind that our apostolic life and fraternal life are integrally related. As Franciscans, when we minister, we minister to and with our brothers and sisters and we minister to the larger community. It is not only "what we do" but also "how we do it." As Franciscans, the witness of our spirituality and formation demonstrates how we minister together with our brothers and sisters in fraternity and how we minister to the larger community.

The fraternity apostolate is our privilege and responsibility to go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Holy Spirit and the Church. When we come together in our fraternity gatherings we interact with each other, but the fraternity apostolate gives us the added opportunity to cooperate and minister with each other at a different level. Our hearts are good and generous, but they need to meet together as a unit. When we choose an apostolate in which all participate, in some manner, we will come to know each other at a deeper level. When we live in relationship, we learn about the other - sharing values, telling one's story, telling about our relationships and working with others. Working with another person reveals the strengths and weaknesses - whether a leader or a follower, whether insistent or compliant - in other words we learn whether we cooperate, share, truly listen, are open to change, respect the other, appreciate the person and the task. A cooperative spirit attentive to those involved and the objective of the task are the basis to pursue the apostolate. This pursuit is to communicate individuals working as a unit in peace and harmony - to feed, to clothe, to comfort - to make Christ present in the name of Francis. Then and only then will our vocation as Secular Franciscans be realized and the passion for our vocation become alive.

## **DOCUMENTATION AND WAY TO LIVE THE SPIRITUALITY PILLAR**

Let us go forth as instruments of the Holy Spirit to promote and live the attributes of the Holy Spirit unity, wholeness, peace, communion, healing and life - in our spirituality.

### **APPLICATION:**

Focus on Franciscan spirituality.

We are committed Catholics with our own private and Marian devotions, but when we come together as Secular Franciscans it is to focus on Gospel to life and life to the Gospel as exemplified by Saint Francis of Assisi.

There is a wealth of materials available, which includes the Blessed Mother as Advocate of our Order, Saint Clare, Franciscan saints, scripture and church teachings.

Use these materials to enrich, intensify, and relate to our Franciscan charism and way of life.

Study the Franciscan Saints.

Focus on the spirituality of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Contemplate the virtues of a particular saint(s). We become what we behold.

Determine to internalize and integrate their virtues in your lives.

Consider scheduling an "Epiphany and Extraction of Saints Ceremony" in the month of January. During this celebration: every member, present and excused, receives the name of a Franciscan saint, a virtue or element of Franciscan spirituality, a scripture, words of Saint Francis, and the name of a member, present or excused. For the duration of the year, it is to keep in mind the saint, the virtue or element, the scripture and the words of Saint Francis. In addition, we pray for our special brother or sister.

In the following months of the year, members might share their Epiphany and Extraction experiences with the fraternity.

Plan to celebrate this ceremony every year. Plan to give teachings on the Liturgy of the Hours.

Keep in mind Francis' "Letter to the Whole Order - On Praying the Divine Office": With all earnestness, I ask my lord minister general to see to it that the clerics pray the Divine Office with devotion before God, not focusing on melody of voice but on harmony of mind, so that their voices be attuned to their thoughts, and their thoughts to God. Thus, they will please God by the purity of their minds, and not charm people's ears with the preciousness of their singing voices.

Review "Rubrics for the Communal Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours" - BSSF Region.

Pray the Liturgy of the Hours in your private prayers.

This practice will nourish the communal prayer.

This practice unites us with the whole body of Christ through the ages in continuing the voice of creation; thus affecting the whole world by the Liturgy of Hours prayers.

Consider praying the readings using the sacred reading process *Lectio Divina*.

*Lectio Divina* is "letting our Divine Friend speak to us through His inspired and inspiring word." (Source of quote - Fr. M. Basil Pennington)

Consider Special Prayer forms for the liturgical seasons. *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* - page 104

Pray the Stations of the Cross in a variety of ways during the Season of Lent. Perhaps the fraternity could even come together and pray them every Friday.

This might be the opportune time to ask your pastor if your fraternity could be responsible for organizing or participating in the Way of the Cross presentations.

Pray the Rosary to honor the Virgin Mary, protectress and advocate of our Order. The Rule: Article 9

The Franciscan Crown Rosary is very special and appropriate for May, the month of Mary.

Use *The Joyful Mysteries in the lives of the Virgin Mary and Saint Francis of Assisi* booklet for reflections while praying the Crown Rosary. The booklet is also great formation.

The Seven Sorrows (Dolors) of Mary Chaplet would be very appropriate for October, the month of the rosary, Our Lady of the Rosary Memorial and the Transitus.

Perhaps if your fraternity gathering is on or close to the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into Heaven or the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary or another Marian celebration you might pray the rosary in fraternity.

Consider praying the Pro-life Rosary for the Memorial of Our Lady of Guadalupe - patroness of the unborn.

Consider praying the World Mission Rosary for Africa, Oceania, Europe, America, and Asia.

Keep in mind that the rosary is Contemplative Prayer - The Rule: Article 8

Contemplate and relive the mysteries of the life of Christ while praying the rosary.

The CD "Mother of Mercy - A Rosary of Healing" is a beautiful guided experience of Contemplative Prayer that you pray with your hearts, your lips, and your fingers.

Include spontaneous prayers during your fraternity gatherings.

Explore and practice Contemplative Prayer as a community and in private. Videos and retreats are available.

Dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of your personal prayer lives

Dialogue about Intercessory Prayer - seriousness, faithfulness, perseverance, approaches, practices.

Be creative! View videos. Be sure to dialogue about the video after the viewing.

Prepare reflection questions for the dialogue.

Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father,  
so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.  
Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.

The Rule: Article 8

*Be still, and know that I am God.  
Psalm 46:11 (NAB)*

## **DOCUMENTATION AND WAY TO IMPLEMENT THE FORMATION PILLAR**

Let us go forth as instruments of the Holy Spirit to promote and live the attributes of the Holy Spirit unity, wholeness, peace, communion, healing and life - in our formation.

### **APPLICATION:**

As the formators address formation by the Four Pillars, they will keep in mind the Time of Initiation, Article 38, and the Time of Formation, Article 40:1, of the 2000 General Constitutions and the National Statutes, i.e. times may be extended, *but not shortened*. Our Regional Formation Commission is recommending extended times, i.e., Orientation Phase - six months; Inquiry Phase - one year; Candidacy Phase - two years. The extended time will give the Inquirer, the Ongoing Formator, and the Interviewers' time to discern if the Inquirer has the call and suitability to begin the Candidacy Phase. Likewise, the extended time will give the Candidate, the Ongoing Formator, and the Interviewers' time to discern the Candidates suitability and readiness to make a lifelong commitment to the OFS. Please refer to the "BSSF Regional Orientation and Initial Formation Process Schedule" found in the Formation Guidelines for the complete process.

We suggest that fraternities and groups place special emphasis on the beginning formation - the Orientation Phase and Inquiry Phase.

There is a wealth of information available for Initial and Ongoing Formation programs. Consult the “BSSF Recommended List of Initial and Ongoing Formation Texts and Resources.”

Keep in mind that National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order-USA recommends a minimum of one hour of Ongoing Formation at every monthly fraternity gathering. As your fraternity grows, one hour may not be enough time for everyone to participate in Initial and Ongoing Formation.

Consider extending the time of your fraternity gathering.

Discern and encourage the teaching gifts of the members. Promote using their gifts to facilitate formation sessions and/or small share groups.

It is essential to practice “Respectful Communication” and the “Mutual Invitation” process in fraternity. Mutual Invitation is one way that each member is given time to share during Orientation, Initial Formation and Ongoing Formation.

Promote variety rather than sameness, i.e., scripture, storytelling, book reviews, crafts, instrumental music, singing, writing impressions of aspects of the study and small group dialogue.

Consider different ways of presenting materials - Videos, DVDs, CDs, Power Point, audio tapes, slides, outside presenters, panel discussions, articles from the TAU-USA and Communion. Include dialogue with presentations. Lectures are the weakest form of presentations.

Consider using small share groups to dialogue about the formation lessons. Perhaps include all members: Professed and those in formation - Orientees, Inquirers, and Candidates. This is an excellent way to come to know your professed brothers and sisters and those in formation.

They have been made living members of the  
Church by being buried and raised with  
Christ in baptism;

they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession,  
Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all  
people, proclaiming Christ by their life and works.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his  
example, let them devote themselves energetically  
to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests,  
fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and  
creativity.

The Rule: Article 6

*“Were not our hearts burning (within us)  
while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?”*

Luke 24:32 (NAB)

## **DOCUMENTATION AND WAY TO FULFILL THE FRATERNITY PILLAR**

Let us go forth as instruments of the Holy Spirit to promote and fulfill the attributes of the  
Holy Spirit unity, wholeness, peace, communion, healing and life - in our fraternity.

APPLICATION:

Keep in mind that the entire fraternity is responsible for consistent and continual vibrant fraternity gatherings and fraternal life.

Share the technical aspects of fraternal life.

Offer to help. Share your gifts. Everyone has other commitments.

Fraternity ministers are encouraged to delegate opportunities to serve.

Be ready and willing to accept these opportunities to serve.

Remember to call or e-mail a designated member(s) of the council to be excused if you will be absent from a fraternity gathering. To remember your commitment to our way of life is to care. It is to respect your importance and the importance of fraternity.

Keep in mind the balance between prayer and formation, social and business.

Emphasize the Spirituality and Formation Pillars while minimizing business.

Conduct most of the business in the fraternity council meetings.

Present PROPOSED plans to members for their approval and ownership before implementation.

Discuss if and how to present agendas.

Consider mentioning only selected items when reviewing the agenda.

Members can ask questions after reviewing the agenda.

Written agendas are a connection between the fraternity and those absent (excused and the homebound members).

Fraternity minutes are an invaluable connection between the fraternity and those absent (excused and homebound members).

Keep in mind that you are members of an extended, international family.

Include news and prayer requests of your regional, national, and international Franciscan family.

Keep in mind that every member has the privilege and responsibility to promote vocations in the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS).

Wear your Tau Cross. It is your habit. Let us not be a well-kept secret...

Consider that a vocation may originate through experiencing your Franciscan spirituality as a

Secular Franciscan coupled with the invitation to "Come and See."

Remember that you have the opportunity to be the herald of a great leader in the Church, Saint Francis of Assisi. Share the gift of the man and message.

Ask, "How might I share the gift of my Secular Franciscan vocation"? Be creative.

Promote the OFS and fraternity in church bulletins, diocesan newspapers, etc. on a regular basis.

Share the happenings in your fraternal life such as rites and activities.

Consider inviting parishioners to a Franciscan Day of Reflection (developed with them in mind). Do not under estimate the power of their being "in" fraternity and experiencing our way of life.

Plan to dialogue about the Franciscan Wake Service A source: *Secular Franciscan Companion* - page 185

Have your members talked to their family about including the Franciscan Wake Service in their funeral preparations?

Is the program available to show the family?

Does the church and funeral home have the program?

Are your members preparing for Sister Death?

Plan to have the "Annual Renewal of Franciscan Commitment" as a special ceremony on a specific day every year - perhaps on October 3 following the Transitus or the Memorial of

Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, the patroness of our Order or the Feast of Saint Louis IX, patron of our Order.

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.

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.

Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with God.

The Rule: Article 19

*For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit;  
whoever serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by others.  
Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another.  
Romans 14: 17-19 (NAB)*

## **DOCUMENTATION AND WAY TO LIVE THE APOSTOLATE PILLAR**

Let us go forth as instruments of the Holy Spirit to promote and live the attributes of the Holy Spirit unity, wholeness, peace, communion, healing and life - in our apostolate.

### **APPLICATION:**

Pursue the challenge to bring your good and generous hearts into unity, i.e., that all may be one.

Address the questions: Is our community sensitive to the gifts and temperaments of our members ministering to each other? Is our community sensitive to the gifts and temperaments of our members ministering to the wider community?

Promote an apostolate, ongoing or defined for a particular time and/or for a specified length of time, in which all the fraternity, in some manner, participates. For those who have limitations, ask how they might help with the apostolate. Would they pray the Franciscan Crown Rosary and/or attend Eucharistic Adoration as often as possible for the intentions of the apostolate? Would they consider sending cards, food, and/or items for special needs if there are people involved? Be creative!

IF the fraternity is discerning options for an apostolate(s), it is important that there is ample opportunity for the members of fraternity to discuss, approve and own the apostolate.

Eventually the local council must approve the apostolate.

Within a reasonable time frame (three months), develop a written plan outlining the choice(s) of an apostolate, the frequency, and duration of service, the approach/plan of action and members that will own and fulfill this apostolate.

During the next three months, implement the plan.

Be accountable to each other for implementation of the plan.

Peruse the “Theological Reflections after Fraternity Apostolate Experience” document in the *BSSF Regional Formators’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*. Determine to use the reflections of this document and dialogue using one reflection or more after the apostolic endeavors.

As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courageous spirit accept all people

as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ,  
A sense of community will make them joyful  
and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people,  
especially with the lowly  
for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

The Rule: Article 13

*For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus.  
For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.  
There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male  
and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.  
Galatians 3:26 -28 (NAB)*

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