

**Brothers and Sisters of Saint Francis
Region
Secular Franciscan Order**

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**BSSF Regional FORMATORS' Guidelines
For Orientation and Initial Formation**

FOREWORD

The foundation of our Secular Franciscan formation program must flow from Holy Scripture. Besides the Formators, the entire fraternity accompanies those in Initial Formation on “h/her journey of discovery of God, of St. Francis, and the individual’s own call”. *Guidelines for Initial Formation*, p.9

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. [OFS Rule article # 4]

The Formators’ role is to foster the growth of those in Initial Formation with opportunities that internalize and integrate gospel values. These opportunities include “experiences of the evangelical life in fraternity, a better knowledge of the Order, reading and meditating on Sacred Scripture, to come to know the person and writings of Francis and Franciscan spirituality, and to study the Rule and Constitutions. They are trained in a love for the Church and acceptance of her teaching”, which is stated in our General Constitution article #40.

Our *BSSF Regional FORMATORS’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation* seeks to lay out a user friendly schedule for the entire initial formation program by including the objectives, content, and documents that are used and needed during the orientation phase, inquiry phase, and candidacy phase.

Unique to our region are the Four Pillars—Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity, and Apostolate—which is the foundation of our regional initial and ongoing formation program. “The intent of addressing 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”. *Four Pillars*

Building on the “Guidelines for Initial Formation in the OFS in the U.S.”, “Elements of Formation: A Reflection on the Formation Process”, and the Four Pillars—the BSSF Regional Formation Commission has prepared a manual for local formators by creating a unified and consistent initial formation program in our region.

The final evaluations, reviews, and recommendations were made by numerous, local Secular Franciscans. Final approval was made by our BSSF Regional Council, which now makes it OUR first *BSSF Regional Formators’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*.

Prepared by the BSSF Formation Commission and approved by BSSF-REC- September, 2003

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We recommend that you refer to the formation resources compiled by the National Formation Commission found on the Secular Franciscan-USA website.

[Formation & Spirituality – Secular Franciscan Order – USA \(secularfranciscansusa.org\)](http://secularfranciscansusa.org)



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“COME AND SEE” VISITOR’S INITIAL INTERVIEW

This conversation is an opportunity to share who we are as Secular Franciscans and for the Visitor to share who they are . . . and what they are seeking.

Date: _____ Interviewer _____

VISITOR INFORMATION

Name: _____

Address [include zip code]:

Home phone number _____ cell number: _____

E-mail address, if applicable:

Single _____ Married: _____ Name of Spouse: _____

Widow/Widower: _____ Divorced: _____ Remarried _____

Names and ages of children, if applicable _____

Emergency Contact Person Information, if applicable

Name of parish:

Address of parish [include zip code]: _____

Name of Reference: Ideally, your pastor is your reference. Please make him part of your OFS journey - from the beginning.

SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

If you wish to learn more about the OFS and enter Orientation, you will be asked to provide us with recently (6 mos) issued copies of your Sacramental Certificates, both sides. All copies will be returned. Please consult your pastor if you need guidance on obtaining these.

Baptism____ Eucharist____ Confirmation____ Matrimony____ Copy of Decree of nullity____, if you are divorced and remarried, and Holy Orders _____ (if diocesan priest or deacon)

Up to this time - within your parish community, in what service or ministries have you been involved (e.g. choir, sacristan, altar server, lectors)?

If you have participated in other faith formation organizations, classes, etc. (e.g. R.C.I.A., formal Bible study, “Why Catholic?”, other Third Orders), please tell me about those experiences.

What else would you like to share that would help us to understand what you are seeking?

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

What prompts you to inquire about Secular Franciscan Order [OFS]?

Have you any familiarity with the OFS? If so, what are your impressions?

Have you come to know any Secular Franciscans? If so, what are your impressions?

Our journey as OFS members introduces us to rich spiritual opportunities to cultivate a life of virtue. Do you currently have any ideas to what you would like to achieve spiritually?

How do you think the OFS might help you achieve these goals?

How willing and able are you to participate in the monthly formation process and monthly fraternity gatherings?

How supportive is your family of your decision to explore the possibility that you may have a calling to the OFS?

Should you decide to journey with us, you . . .

1. Will be asked to reflect upon your understanding of the Church and its teachings. These teachings, which form our belief system, were most fundamental and of paramount importance to St. Francis of Assisi. We Secular Franciscans are to mirror St. Francis by embracing the Church's teachings.
2. Will have opportunities to experience, interiorize, and integrate gospel values as we seek to go from gospel to life and life to gospel - as exemplified by Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi.
3. Will be introduced and expected to become familiar with our Franciscan history and spirituality - especially St. Francis and St. Clare.
4. Will study the Rule and General Constitutions of the OFS.
5. Will experience different forms of Franciscan prayer.
6. Will come to deepen and understand our call to Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation.

You will also be introduced to and become familiar with The Four Pillars, which are the foundation on which our Secular Franciscan "way of life" is based. These pillars are **Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity, and Apostolate.**

What else would you like to ask about our formation process, our fraternity, our Order?



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BSSF REGIONAL Orientation & INITIAL FORMATION PROCESS SCHEDULE

This document was created to assist the formation team with their record keeping and as a cumulative guide of objectives for their formation program.

Name: _____

“Come and See” Visitor’s Initial Contact: (Date) _____

We recommend that a Visitor sit in on two or three fraternity gatherings, before talking with the Formation Director. At an arranged time, a conversation - using the “Come and See” Visitor’s Initial Contact document - should be scheduled between the Visitor and the Formation Director. The initial contact document is meant to prompt a conversation rather than questions and answers. The purpose of the conversation is an opportunity for us to share who and what we are, and for the Visitor to share who they are and what they are seeking. The conversation should be unhurried and take place in a comfortable, quiet setting. Any concerns, not to admit the Visitor into our formation process, should be taken to the fraternity council for discussion and approval.

An Ongoing Formator refers to the professed member who is assigned to a particular class and will be with them throughout initial formation. Please encourage those in Orientation and Initial Formation to journal about their faith journey.

ORIENTATION PHASE

The role of the Formators is to witness and to accompany the person on his/her journey of discovery of God, of St. Francis, and of the individual’s own call.

BSSF Region recommends sixmonths.

Orientation Phase of Initial Formation begins: (Date) _____

Suggested Content:

Creed

Ecclesiology of the Laity [Baptism]

Overview of the Franciscan Movement - Come and See

The life of St. Francis

The branches of the Franciscan Family

The Secular Franciscan Order

Phases of Formation and Expectations

The PURPOSE of the Orientation Phase is to determine some basic dispositions of prospective members that are essential to building fraternity - entering into mature, committed relationships and to insure that there is a clear understanding of the Secular Franciscan way of life. Please refer to the FUN Manual For the Formator Section P 33

During the six months that the Orientee is participating in the monthly formation process and the monthly fraternity gatherings, the following should be noted.

1. Each Orientee will be asked to provide their sacramental certificates [listed on the "Come and See" Visitor's Initial Contact document and given to the Ongoing formator (the professed member who has been assigned to this class). The Formation Director with the fraternity council must review certificates. All copies of the sacramental certificates are to be returned - in a timely manner. One cannot become a Candidate without having their sacramental certificates reviewed.
2. During the Orientation Phase, topics on Catholic doctrine will be discussed during one or more of the Orientation sessions. * Documents for the Ongoing Formator will be provided that address basic Catholic beliefs and doctrine.

Sacramental Certificates reviewed by Formation Director and Minister (or Delegates) and returned to aspirant:

(Date) _____

Orientation Phase completed: (Date) _____ will continue? Will not continue _____

INQUIRY PHASE

I

We are NOT preparing those in inquiry for profession. We are preparing them to live our OFS Way of Life.

INQUIRY PHASE - BSSF Region recommends twelve months.

The Inquiry Phase begins with the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming found in the Ritual:

Date

During a previous fraternity gathering a Ceremony of Sponsorship can be arranged. A model of such a ceremony can be found on pages 54-55. The Formation Director presents the following two documents to the Sponsor(s), which has already been agreed upon by the local council/formation team.

1. The Sponsor as an Agent of Secular Franciscan Formation Document
2. **Role of Sponsor** [written by each local fraternity] is included in the ceremony.

Formation Director/ Team assign professed members as a sponsor for the Inquirer/Candidate.

Name of Sponsor: _____ Ceremony of Sponsorship: _____
Date

During the **Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming**, each Inquirer is presented with a gift such as short life (biography) of St. Francis of Assisi (refer to *BSSF Recommended List of Initial Formation Texts and Resources*), the “Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi” document, and the “Four Pillars” document.

Suggested Content:

Vocation and Discernment
History of the OFS and Franciscan Identity
Rule, Constitution, Franciscan spirituality and scripture
The Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi
The Four Pillars
Biography of St. Francis

PURPOSE: During this phase the Inquirer continues to develop an understanding of basic Catholic doctrine and the use of Sacred Scripture in coming to know the person of Jesus.

Unique to our region are the Four Pillars. They are on par with our Rule and Constitution. The Four Pillars, along with our Rule and Constitution, need to be studied and implemented from the beginning so that when they reach Candidacy, they are already practicing the factors in the Four Pillars. These three elements provide a springboard for the journey through formation.

Each Inquirer is to read a biography of St. Francis and be prepared to hand in a written report and discuss the Franciscan vision and dream and how it attracts h/her to seek entry into the OFS. Refer to *The Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi* document, p. 49, for elements of the Franciscan vision.

During this phase, the Inquirer with the help of the Formation Director/team seeks to discern these basic questions:

1. What is a vocation, and how am I **called**?
2. What is Gospel life, and how am I **called** to live it?
3. What is a vocation to the OFS, and am I **called** to live this way of life?

During the first class, each Inquirer is to receive ***Inquiry Phase - Preparation before Admission into Candidacy Phase*** document Please discuss.

Midway into the Inquiry Phase during each Inquirer is to receive a copy of the ***Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase*** document.

Before the Inquirer is interviewed, h/she is asked to make a private retreat to discern h/her suitability and CALL to the OFS. After the private retreat, the Inquirer is asked to give their completed “Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase” document to the Ongoing Formator and make arrangements to meet with the Ongoing Formator. Besides the opportunity to dialogue about the Reflection Questions there is also a need for assurance that h/she has a clear understanding that Profession is a life long commitment. Please refer to **Discernment of a Secular Franciscan Vocation** document for suggestions for identifying one’s Call and Suitability.

If the Inquirer discerns a call to continue the formation process, h/she is asked to make a request, in writing if possible, to the minister. The letter should express the Inquirer’s reasons that he/she discerned his/her call to a vocation in the OFS.

The Formation Director sends the ***Letter of Recommendation*** to the pastor of the Inquirer. The pastor's response must be returned to the Formation Director and received before the Inquirer's interview.

Date Received _____

INTERVIEW - It is important that members of council and anyone involved with those in Initial Formation remember that the interview is confidential information. It is the proper function of the fraternity council and the formation Director/team to dialogue with the Inquirer to determine:

1. That h/she has a calling to be a Secular Franciscan/our way of life and . . .
2. Suitability and readiness of the Inquirer for admission to Candidacy.

Inquirer's INTERVIEW with Formation team/council: Date _____ *If the Inquirer does not continue, please note why not.*

CANDIDACY PHASE - BSSF Region recommends two years not more than 36 mos.

The candidacy phase begins with the Rite of Admission (Date) _____

During the Rite of Admission, each Candidate is presented with a copy of the Rule of the OFS and the TAU necklace, which is the distinctive sign of the OFS (National Statutes).

Suggested Content:

The Volterra Letter [Prologue to the Rule]

The Rule - The Little Red Rule Book

Rule, Constitutions, National Statutes, and Ritual information Handbook [Franciscan Resources]

Sacred Scripture, Franciscan spirituality

Conversion

Penance & the Penitential Movement

PROFESSION

The Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi-

The Four Pillars

Ritual of the OFS

The PURPOSE of the Candidacy Phase is to make ready or "prepare the Candidate for a life-time commitment to live the Rule of the OFS; that is, to make a 'mature and enduring decision to participate as fully as possible in the Church's life and mission according to the manner of St. Francis'. [Commentary on OFS Rule # 23] [FUN Manual](#) pg.36 -39

Please record name and date in Fraternity Register.

During the Candidate's first class, the Ongoing Formator gives each Candidate a copy of ***Preparation before Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order*** document (page 20). Midway through the Candidacy phase, each Candidate should receive a copy of ***Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase*** document (page 21).

If the fraternity does not plan a Day of Reflection for the Candidate, each Candidate is asked to make a private retreat and discern their readiness to live the Rule of the OFS. After the retreat the Candidate completes the reflection questions and arranges to meet with the ongoing Formator. The purpose of the conversation is to discuss the reflection questions.

Date of Day of Reflection or Private Retreat

Date of Conversation

Candidate is asked to send a letter requesting to be professed - expressing why h/she feels ready to make a life-time commitment to the OFS - via Rite of Profession. It is sent to the minister and must be received before the Interview. Date Received _____

Candidate's INTERVIEW is conducted by those who are chosen from the fraternity council/formation team to discern the candidate's suitability and readiness to be professed into the OFS - via **Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase** and **Leader Guide 5**. If the Candidate's response to the reflection questions lacks a personal, thought-provoking response, everyone - especially the candidate - should recognize that h/she is not suitable or ready - at this time. Plus the Candidate and the interviewers will discover how the Candidate is not ready and that h/she needs to be further schooled. The interview team makes their recommendations to the fraternity council, who makes the decision. It is important for the members of council and anyone involved with those in Initial Formation to remember that the interview is confidential information.

Date of Interview _____

If it is decided that the Candidate will not be professed, please explain why not and recommendations for the Candidate to be further schooled. Please attach to this document.

RITE OF PROFESSION in the OFS: Date of Profession _____

Please record name and date of profession in Fraternity Register.



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Orientation & Initial Formation Monthly Attendance Record Fraternity & Formation

Name _____ Phone # _____ Date _____

Record date that each formation session and fraternity gathering was attended. This includes either the scheduled formation session or a make-up session. Use A for Absent, E for Excused, and P for Present.

Orientation Phase

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

NOTES:

Inquiry Phase

Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming _____

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

NOTES:

Candidacy Phase Rite of Admission _____

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Formation												
Fraternity												

Notes:

Date of Rite of Profession _____

Section B: Assessments Pertinent for Each Initial Formation Phase

- 16 Inquiry Phase—Preparation before Admission into Candidacy
- 17 Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase
- 20 Candidacy Phase - Preparation before Profession into the Secular Franciscan Order
- 21 Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase
- 23 Letter of Recommendation
- 25 Interview—Preparation for Profession
- 27 Post Interview—Recommendation to Fraternity Council



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INQUIRY PHASE - Preparations before Admission into the Candidacy Phase

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”-Matt. 18:20. May we always remember to begin and end with prayer and thanksgiving for the presence of the Holy Spirit.

To be given to each Inquirer at h/her first class—please discuss.

Reflection Questions Inquiry Phase	Handout - midway through the Inquirer phase It is to reflect upon your CALL to the OFS. You have begun your sessions with the “Prayer before the San Damiano Crucifix” seeking insight and wisdom so that you might discern His holy and true will. This “guided reflection” is one answer to that prayer because it forces you to spend time in serious introspection.
Biography of St. Francis	Turn in a written report and give an oral report about the Franciscan vision and dream and how it attracts you to seek entry into the OFS.
Sessions	We recommend written homework assignments and making up any missed session before the next session.
Private Retreat	to discern, using the “Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase”, upon your suitability and call to a vocation into the OFS. This is a time to draw aside, perhaps in Eucharistic Adoration or the silence of your home, etc., in prayer with a vibrancy and spirit that truly engages the Almighty: <i>[source Formation Pillar]</i>
Post Retreat	to meet with your ongoing formator after your private retreat and dialogue about your responses to the Reflection Questions. Please give your ongoing formator a copy of the completed “Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase” in advance of this Conversation so there is ample time to review your responses.
Interview	On your behalf, the Formation Director will send a letter to your pastor requesting his input and recommendation for you to be admitted to the Order. The pastor’s response to the Letter of Recommendation should be made available to the Interviewers before the Interview. During an interview with chosen members of the council, you will dialogue about your time in the Orientation and Inquiry phase and your responses to the Reflection Questions. If it is discerned that you have a call to continue the formation process, you are asked to make a formal request, in writing if possible, to the minister for admission to the Order.
Rite of Admission	Upon approval of admission into the Secular Franciscan Order and the Candidacy Phase of formation by the fraternity council. <i>Sources: The Rule 23:1 General Constitutions 39:3</i>



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REFLECTION QUESTIONS—INQUIRY PHASE

PURPOSE—"Knowledge seeks to form." Four Pillars

Before one can truly internalize and integrate the Franciscan Charism, it is important that the Inquirer has a basic understanding of our General Constitution, the OFS Rule, and the Four Pillars.

SOURCES FOR REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

THE RULE OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER, 2000 THE FOUR PILLARS

The Constitutions have as their purpose: to apply the Rule and to indicate concretely the conditions for belonging to the OFS, its government, the organization of life in fraternity, and its seat. *Rule 1:3 General Constitutions - Article 4:3*

Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order is a life-time commitment to the gospel life. It is a vocation. It is the solemn ecclesial act, by which the candidate, remembering the call received from Christ, renews the promises of h/her Baptism and commitment of Confirmation and publicly affirms a personal commitment to live the Gospel in the world according to the example of Francis and following the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The Rule 23:3 General Constitutions: Article 42 Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order: Rite of Profession

* **

CHAPTER ONE - THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

1.1 What does it mean to me that life in the Secular Franciscan Order is a vocation?

The Rule 1-19 General Constitutions - Articles 1-3, 8-27, 37:3, 100 Spirituality and Formation Pillars

1.2 Why do I believe that God may be calling me to the Secular Franciscan way of life?

The Rule 1-2 General Constitutions - Articles 1:3; 8-16; 17-23; 26-27; 30; 37:2,3; 42:1, 4; 44-45
Formation and Fraternity Pillars

CHAPTER TWO - THE WAY OF LIFE

2.1 What does it mean to go from the Gospel to life and life to the Gospel?

The Rule 4-19 General Constitutions - Articles 8:2, 9, 100 Spirituality and Formation Pillars

2.2 What is my understanding of Franciscan spirituality?

The Rule 4-5, 7-11, 13, 19 General Constitutions - Articles 1:3, 2:18, 3:3, 9:1, 10-11, 14:2, 15, 18:4, 40:2
Spirituality Pillar

2.3 What is my understanding of the Secular Franciscan way of life?

The Rule 4-19 General Constitutions - Articles 8-16 Spirituality and Formation Pillars

How do I understand that the Secular Franciscan way of life is more than a devotion to Sts. Francis and Clare?

How do I understand that the Secular Franciscan way of life differs from the church ministries I perform or the church organizations to which I belong?

.....

2.4 How will I know that I am internalizing the way of Francis and Clare?

The Rule 7-9, 11, 13 General Constitutions - Articles 14, 16, 17:3, 18, 40:2 Spirituality and Formation Pillars

2.5 At this time in my journey what does the following promise at profession mean to me?

“I promise to live all the days of my life the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its rule of life.” Ritual of the OFS, p. 24

The Rule 2, 4-19, 23, 25 General Constitutions - Articles 8; 42:1, 4; 44-45

Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

CHAPTER THREE - LIFE IN FRATERNITY

3.1 Why is life in fraternity so vital to members of the Secular Franciscan Order?

The Rule 20-26 General Constitutions - Articles 3:3, 26:2, 27:2, 28:1, 33:1, 37:3 Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

3.2 How am I living the conditions for admission into the Secular Franciscan Order, i.e., to profess the Catholic faith, to live in communion with the Church, to be of good moral standing, and to show clear signs of a vocation? The Rule 22; 23:1, 2; 24 General Constitutions - Articles 39:2, 40:2

*HOW THE ABOVE QUESTION IS MEANT TO BE UNDERSTOOD - “The commentary on Canon 316 makes it clear that ‘departure from the faith’ includes two elements 1) An expressed disavowal of affiliation with the Catholic Church; 2) The ‘public’ nature of this disavowal. In practice this Canon does not include people who may doubt or question only one element (or even several of them) of the faith. Holding unpopular theological opinions would not inhibit membership. A great deal of caution and restraint is needed in applying Canon 316 (cf. *Code of Canon Law*, 251).
Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

3.3 What are my expectations of life in fraternity?

The Rule 20-22, 24 General Constitutions - Articles 9:2; 13:1; 14:4; 17:2,4; 22:2; 26:2; 27:2; 28:1; 30-33
Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

3.4 If my expectations of fraternal life are not met, how will I respond?

The Rule 10; 19; 23:3, 4 General Constitutions - Article 30 Spirituality, Formation and Fraternity Pillars

3.5 What are my gifts?

The Rule 4, 6, 13-19, 21, 25 General Constitutions - Articles 12, 30:3, 31, 32:2, 37:3
Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

How can I share my gifts with the local fraternity, the regional fraternity and the national fraternity?

3.6 What spiritual growth have I experienced during the Orientation and Inquiry Phases of formation?

The Rule 22, 24 General Constitutions - Articles 37:2, 3; 40:3 Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

3.7 How do I understand the statement: “Participation in the meetings of the local fraternity is an indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life”?

The Rule 24 General Constitutions - Articles 40:3, 53:1-3 Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

3.8 In what church ministries or clubs and organizations am I involved?

The Rule 24 General Constitutions - Article 100 Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

3.9 If necessary, what changes/adjustments am I willing to make with these other commitments so that my Secular Franciscan commitments will be a priority?

The Rule 24 General Constitutions - Articles 11, 30, 40:3, 100, 102, 103 Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolic Pillars

4.0 How do I understand the following “Profession incorporates the candidate into the Order and is by its nature a perpetual/life-time commitment”?

GC article 42:4 and the Rule #23.

*Called to Rebuild the Church, a Spiritual Commentary on the General Constitutions of the OFS, page 97, By Lester Bach, OFM Cap.



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Candidacy Phase - Preparations before Profession In the Secular Franciscan Order

To be given to each candidate during their first class, please discuss

Reflection Questions - Given out midway through the Candidacy Phase

Sessions	We recommend making up any missed session before the next session and written homework assignments.
Private Retreat	to reflect—using the “Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase” document - upon your suitability and readiness for admission to profession. This is a time to draw aside for further serious introspection, <u>e.g.</u> , in a silent retreat, in Eucharistic Adoration, in the silence of your home, etc.
Post Retreat Conversation	to meet with your ongoing formator/delegate after your private retreat. This is an opportunity to dialogue with your ongoing formator/delegate about your responses to the reflection questions. Before this meeting, please give h/her a copy of your completed “Reflection Questions—Candidacy Phase”.
Letter to Council	to make a request to enter the OFS by a formal act, in writing—if possible. Please give your request to the minister of the fraternity.
Interview	Your On-going Formator will make arrangements for your interview. Copies of your <u>completed</u> “Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase” should be given to each interviewer - before the interview.
Post Interview Recommendation	to know that the interviewers will discuss your responses during the interview and the formation director will complete the “Post Interview Recommendation” and give it to the fraternity council. The fraternity council will review the recommendation and make a collegial response to your request. The minister gives a formal response answer to you and communicates this to the fraternity. Rule 23 GC 39:1-4 (If it is decided that you are not ready, the spiritual assistant, minister, and formation director or delegates will schedule a time with you to privately dialogue with you about the council’s decision and make recommendations. A copy of the decision w/recommendations will be included in your formation records. <u>You will be the first to hear the decision</u> before the minister announces it to the members of the fraternity.



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REFLECTION QUESTIONS - Candidacy Phase

Purpose—"Practice of knowledge more deeply roots the elements that transform." Four Pillars Candidacy is a time to internalize and integrate the Four Pillars into one's life.

These questions give the Candidate and the council the opportunity to reflect upon h/her **readiness** to profess our Rule.

THE FOUR PILLARS SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION, FRATERNITY, APOSTOLATE

Spirituality Pillar

"The Spirituality Pillar must be anchored in prayer and contemplation. It is the means to being attentive and pursuing the application of our Franciscan Spirituality on a daily basis. It is the spirit of God that we wish to nourish and make strong within us. This internal quest is realized through the external stimulus of prayer."

- 1.1 Tell us about your prayer life - its strengths and weaknesses.
- 1.2 How has my prayer life given my life direction?
- 1.3 Through my prayer life - How has the spirit of God been nourished and made strong within me?
- 1.4 How and what have I prayerfully discerned that makes me think that I am ready and suitable to profess and make a life-time commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order - at this time?

Formation Pillar

"Formation is our vehicle that informs, forms, and ultimately transforms us. During the formation process, information is imparted 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."

- 2.1 We are on a journey of allowing our Rule to transform us. Which articles of the Rule have transformed me and which ones continue to challenge me and how?

- 2.2 Tell us which stories about Sts. Francis and Clare have resonated the most deeply with you and how?
- 2.3 During my time in formation what gospel(s) reading has/have touched, inspired, and sustained me during my formation journey and how?
- 2.4 Now having been with the Fraternity for some time how has my understanding of the Catholic faith and doctrine been enhanced, strengthened, integrated and internalized by virtue of the Franciscan influence of formation/ community/ apostolate and spirituality?

Fraternity Pillar

“The basic unit of the Order is the local fraternity. Fraternity is the privileged place to pray together, to learn, to serve, and to grow as members within a particular spirituality and lifestyle. 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 do this by following the example of Sts. Francis and Clare, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of life with God and people.”

- 3.1 Using the above, underlined criteria - how have I made Christ the inspiration and the center of my life with God and others?
- 3.2 As members of a fraternity, we strive “to promote the ‘good of the fraternity’, rather than promoting one’s individual agenda” (the Fraternity Pillar). Tell us about your strengths and weaknesses of being an active member of our fraternity. How has being a member of fraternity transformed me?

Apostolate Pillar

“The fraternity apostolate gives us the important opportunity to actually work together as a fraternity. When we meet together in our fraternity gatherings we get a chance to interact with each other, but the fraternity apostolate gives us the added opportunity to interact and work together at a different level. A cooperative spirit attentive to those involved and the objective of the task are the basis on which the apostolate is pursued. This pursuit is to communicate individuals working as a unit in peace and harmony—to feed, to clothe, to conform—to make Christ present in the name of Francis.”

- 4.1 As a candidate how have I participated in the fraternity apostolate? How has the fraternity apostolate transformed me?

4.2 Do I understand that my participation and cooperation with the fraternity while ministering is as important as the ministry we do? How have I been ministered to in a Christ like manner and received the benefit of the ministry?



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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

Dear _____,

May the Lord give you His Peace!

_____ has completed the Orientation phase and Inquiry phase in
the

Name

_____, OFS (Secular Franciscan Order)

Name of Fraternity

At this point designated members of our council/formation team will meet with the inquirer to discern their CALL and Suitability to their becoming a candidate in the OFS. As Pastor of the Inquirer's faith community, we would greatly appreciate your insight and recommendation to help us to discern their call and suitability to the OFS.

Our Initial Formation process consists of the following:

- They will be asked to reflect upon h/her understanding of the Church and its teachings. These teachings, which form our belief system, were most fundamental and of paramount importance to St. Francis of Assisi. We Secular Franciscans are to mirror St. Francis by embracing the Church's teachings.
- They will have opportunities to experience, interiorize, and integrate gospel values - as we seek to go from gospel to life and life to gospel - as exemplified by Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi.
- They will be introduced to and expected to become familiar with our Franciscan history and spirituality - especially St. Francis and St. Clare
- They will study The Rule and General Constitution of the OFS. - They will experience different forms of Franciscan prayer.

As secular Franciscans, we are gospel people who go from gospel to life and life to gospel - as exemplified by St. Francis of Assisi. We are called to . . .

- Develop a sense of Church, the Franciscan Vocation, and enlivening the apostolic life within our fraternity.
- Observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Make Christ the inspiration and center of our lives with God and others.
- Imitate Christ by the radical interior change called conversion, which is ongoing.
- Build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more affectively.
- Promote peace, justice, and respect for all creation - especially among our brothers and sisters.

- To become more intimately united with the Church and be instruments of her mission.

Does your experience and observation of _____ lead you to discern that h/she is suitable and ready to enter our Order and has a propensity to live our way of life?

What else would you like to share that would help us with our discernment process?

Thank you for your invaluable insight and recommendation.

Pastor's signature

Please return this letter with your response by _____. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Date

Please mail to our Formation Director - name and address listed below:

Name _____

Address _____

We wish you peace and all good,

Formation Director

Enclosure: stamped, self-addressed envelope



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INTERVIEW - PREPARATION FOR PROFESSION

We recommend that the Formation Director, Minister, and Spiritual Assistant or their delegates interview the Candidate. Sometime before the interview the Formation Director gives each Interviewer a copy of the Candidate's completed "Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase" document and a copy of the Leader Guide 5. Both documents should be read and their importance prayerfully discerned. Before the Candidate joins the interview, the Ongoing Formator should be available to answer any questions about the Candidate and their conversation with the Candidate about the reflection questions. The Ongoing Formator should bring all records about the Candidate to the interview. Having the interview take place in a circle reminds us of our brotherhood/sisterhood. Optional - the Ongoing Formator may sit in on the interview.

The purpose of the interview is to discern the Candidate's readiness and suitability for profession. Dialoguing with the Candidate about h/her responses to the *Reflection Question - Candidacy Phase* should give the Interviewers insight into h/her readiness to profess the Rule. Please refer to *Leader Guide Five*, which gives ideas for discerning the candidate's suitability to profess the Rule.

INTERVIEW

Keep in mind that true communal discernment relies upon the Spirit of God to make up for what is lacking in human wisdom.

Spiritual Assistant or delegate begins interview with prayer.
Invites the Spirit of God into the discernment process

Formation Director or delegate:

Thanks the candidate.

States that the purpose of the interview is to discern the candidate's suitability and readiness to make a permanent commitment to the Gospel way of life in the Secular Franciscan Order by observing its Rule of life.

Facilitates reviewing the "Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase".

Facilitates an open forum between the Interviewers and the Candidate.

Thanks the candidate and states that the interviewers will make their recommendations to the members of the fraternity council. The council takes time to prayerfully deliberate on Interviewer's recommendations and their decision for acceptance. When the decision is made, the minister gives a formal answer to the candidate and communicates this to the fraternity. Closes the interview by leading the "Our Father".

TEAM EVALUATION AFTER INTERVIEW SESSION

Before this part of the evaluation is completed, we suggest the Interviewers draw aside, to prayerfully discern the following:

When _____ was interviewed and approved to become a Candidate, it was discerned that h/she had a CALL to the OFS. During our interview, we sought to discern how the Candidate is demonstrating how h/she is internalizing and integrating the Four Pillars into h/her life.

If the individual is lacking, he or she is to be further schooled in living the integration of the Four Pillars. Becoming obvious in these last statements our formation is becoming more personal and individual rather than communal and class. . . We know from experience that the human spirit does 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 Franciscan life? Accepting these facts of time and intent we remove the burden of having to 'make ready the product' in a prescribed time'.
The Formation Pillar

The Formation Director is asked to make notes that h/she will use to complete the "Post Interview - Recommendation to Fraternity Council" document for the fraternity council.

If the consensus of the Interviewers is that the Candidate's time in the Candidacy phase needs to be extended, attach a list of recommendations that you believe will help the Candidate acquire the necessary knowledge and experience to more fully integrate and internalize the Four Pillars into h/her way of life.

After the Formation Director has completed the "Post Interview - Recommendation to Fraternity Council" document, each of you will be asked to review it and sign the document - before the Formation Director gives it to the fraternity council.

If the fraternity council decides NOT to approve _____'s request to profess - at this time, you will be expected to meet with h/her as a group and go over your recommendations.



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POST INTERVIEW RECOMMENDATION TO FRATERNITY COUNCIL

Before admitting someone to profession, the Council must listen to the
Formation Director and the Spiritual Assistant [GC. 42:1]

We have relied upon the Spirit of God to make up for what is lacking in human wisdom for true communal discernment and recommendation.

After interviewing _____ on behalf of the entire fraternity, we recommend:
Name

_____ He/She is suitable and ready to make a lifetime commitment.

_____ at this time - we recommend that his/her time as a Candidate be extended. We have attached a list of recommendations that we believe will help the Candidate acquire the necessary knowledge and experience to more fully integrate and internalize the Four Pillars into his/her way of life.

Interview: _____
Date

Interviewers:

1. _____ Position: _____

2. _____ Position: _____

3. _____ Position: _____

4. _____ Position: _____

Recommendation accepted by Fraternity Council: Yes ____ No ____
Date

Section C: Initial Formation Texts and Resources

- 29 A Prayer of St. Francis before the Crucifix of San Damiano
- 30 TAU Cross
- 31 The Way of the Cross
- 32 Rubrics for the Communal Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours
- 34 How to Pray the Franciscan Crown Rosary
- 37 Lectio Divina [Sacred Reading]



Prayer before the Crucifix at San Damiano

Most High, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart and
give me true faith,
certain hope and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord, that I may carry out Your holy and true command.

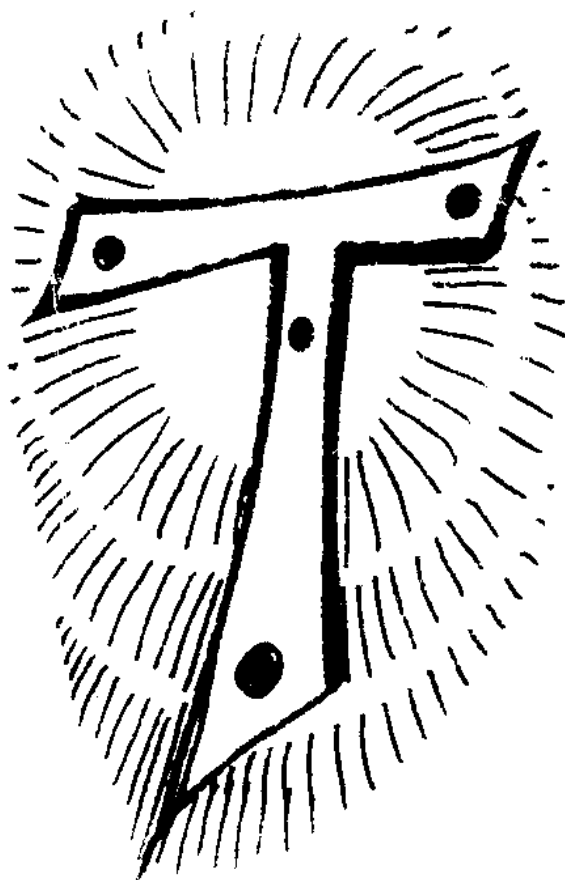
Amen

www.SecularFranciscansUSA.org



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The external sign of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States is the TAU Cross (*The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States of America National Statutes*, Article 16.3).



- “But do not touch any marked with the TAU” (Ezekiel 9:6).
- The TAU is the Greek translation (the Septuagint) was transcribed as T.
- It is the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- The TAU has the same form as the cross on which our Lord was crucified.
- Francis chose the TAU as a symbol of his penitential life.
- The TAU was a constant reminder to Francis of Christ crucified.
- St. Francis viewed the TAU as a symbol of hope amidst the confusion in the Church of his day.
- The TAU became Francis’ personal signature.



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The Way of the Cross

Since Franciscans took responsibility for the holy places in Jerusalem in the year 1342, the Stations or Way of the Cross has been a spiritual devotion closely associated with the Franciscan Order.

The Friars encouraged pilgrims to the Holy Land to commemorate the sufferings of Christ at the very places where these events had occurred. Pilgrims walked from Gethsemane to Jesus' grave and stopped to meditate at least 14 times. Later the Passion of Christ was recalled in Catholic churches where statutes or pictures were placed depicting these sacred events.

-taken from Praying the Way of the Cross
With Meditations from the writings of St. Pio of Pietrelcina
Capuchin Franciscan Friars

We encourage you to choose a version or several versions of The Way of the Cross/Stations of the Cross that are Franciscan or Catholic inspired. We would also recommend that each time you gather on Friday during Lent, pray a different version of The Way of the Cross.



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RUBRICS FOR THE COMMUNAL CELEBRATION OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Select Presider, Song Leader, Antiphonarian and Reader (Presider is a Priest or Deacon, if present)
Divide the community into side one and side two so that the strophes of Psalms and Canticles may be alternated.

The Presider and Antiphonarian set the prayerful, rhythmic pace.

CALL TO PRAYER (All Stand)

INVITATORY Begins the first Hour of the day.

Presider:	+Lord, open my lips (All: Sign of the Cross over lips)
Community:	And my mouth will proclaim your praise.
Presider:	Recites Antiphon.
Community:	Repeats Antiphon.
Presider:	Prays strophes of Psalm
Community:	Repeats Antiphon after each strophe.

INTRODUCTORY VERSE Begins the rest of the Hours

Presider:	+God, come to my assistance (All: Sign of the cross)
Community:	Lord, make haste to help me.
Community	Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia. (Omit during Lent)

Refer to ORDINARY for Invitatory Antiphons during Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter and Ascension.

HYMN

Song Leader: Introduces the Hymn.

PSALMODY (All Sit)

Antiphonarian: Recites Antiphon and introduces the Psalm or Canticle by praying the first line.

Community: Continues praying the Psalm or Canticle by alternating strophes between side one and side two.

Community: Concludes (unless otherwise indicated) Psalm or Canticle by alternating lines:
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:

as it was in the beginning, is now, and **will be** forever. Amen.

Presider: Recites Psalm-prayer after the Psalm.

Community: Repeats Antiphon after Psalm-prayer or Canticle.

READING (Reader Stands)

Reader: **Proclaims** the Word of God after introducing the scripture with: A reading from...
Pause for silent reflection on the Scripture Reading.

RESPONSORY

Reader: Recites verse one, verse two and
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit (**only**)

Community: Responds at the red line after verse one, verse two and the **Glory to** the Father...

GOSPEL CANTICLE (All Stand)

Antiphonarian: +Recites Antiphon and the first line of the Canticle. (All: Sign of the Cross)

Community: Continues praying the Canticle by alternating strophes between side one and side two.

Community: Concludes the Gospel Canticle by alternating lines:
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and **will be** forever. Amen.

Community: Repeats Antiphon.

INTERCESSIONS

Presider: Introduces the intercession.

Community: Responds with the *italicized response*.

Presider: Continues with the intercessions.

Community: Responds at the red lines.

Presider: Invites intentions.
Since the Prayer is of the whole Church and for the whole Church,
universal intentions should take precedence. Personal intentions follow.

Community: Responds to each of these intentions with the *italicized response*.

OUR FATHER

Presider: Introduces the Lord's Prayer.

Community: Continues the Lord's Prayer in unison.

CONCLUSION

Presider: Prays the Concluding Prayer.

Community: Responds with Amen.

DISMISSAL

(All: Sign of the Cross)

+If a priest or deacon is presiding, he dismisses the community with a blessing.

Or the hour concludes with:

+May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to life everlasting. Amen.

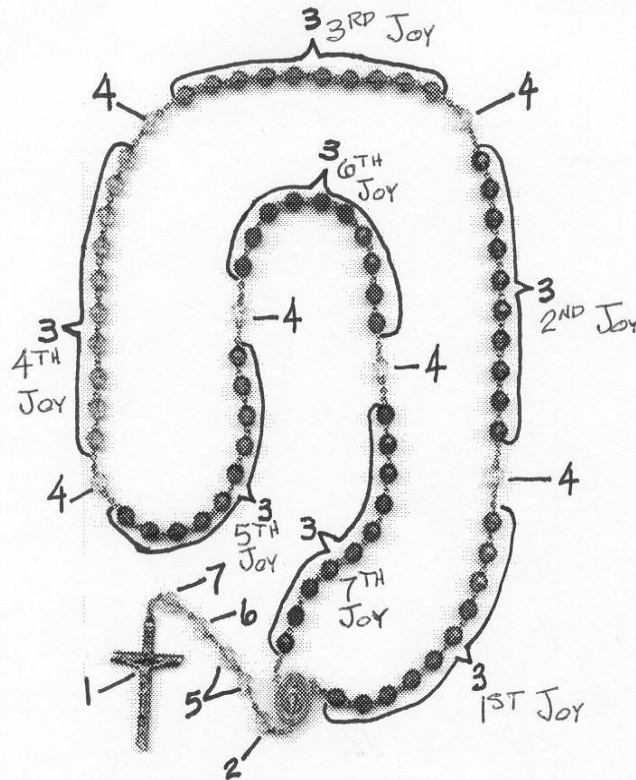
After the blessing, the community may choose to share insights on any part of the Communal Celebration.

The Executive Council of the Brothers and Sisters of St. Francis Region has decided upon these
“Rubrics for the Communal Celebration of *The Liturgy of the Hours*” so
that “all may be one” during our Communal Prayer.

We will pray *The Liturgy of the Hours* in this way during our annual gatherings.

We suggest this format for your fraternity gatherings.

How to Pray the Franciscan Crown Rosary



Franciscan Crown Rosary

- 1) Begin on the crucifix with **"In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."** while making the Sign of the Cross.
- 2) Announce the First **Joy** and say the **Our Father** on the 5th bead from the Cross.
- 3) Say one **Hail Mary** for each of the ten beads.
- 4) Announce the Second **Joy** and then say the **Our Father**. Repeat steps 2 and 3 for the 3rd through the 7th Joys.
- 5) Say two **Hail Mary's** to complete 72 years of Mary's Joy on the fourth and third beads from the Cross.
- 6) Say one **Our Father** for the intentions of the Holy Father on the 2nd bead from the Cross.
- 7) Say one **Hail Mary** for the intentions of the Holy Father on the bead closest to the Cross.

**Mysteries of the Franciscan Crown Rosary
(with Scripture Meditation)**

Annunciation

“In honor of the joy the Blessed Mother felt when the angel announced to her the Incarnation of the Son of God.”
(Luke 1:30-31)

Visitation

“In honor of the joy the Blessed Mother felt on visiting her cousin Elizabeth.”
(Luke 1:41-42)

Nativity

In honor of the supreme happiness that filled the Blessed Mother’s heart on giving birth to Christ the Savior, without pain and without loss of her virginity.”
(Luke 2:4, 7)

Adoration by the Magi

“In honor of the joy the Blessed Mother felt when presenting her Divine Son to the adoration of the Magi.”
(Matthew 2:1-2, 11)

Finding of Jesus in the Temple

“In honor of the joy that thrilled the Blessed Mother’s soul when, after seeking Jesus with deep sorrow for three days, she found him at last among the doctors in the Temple.”
(Luke 2:41, 43, 46-49)

Resurrection

“In honor of the joy the Blessed Mother experienced on beholding her Divine Son gloriously risen from the grave on Easter Sunday.”
(Acts 2:1-4)

Assumption of Mary and Coronation

“In honor of the Blessed Mother’s own most glorious and joyful Assumption into Heaven.”
(Revelation 11:19, 12:1)

History of the Franciscan Crown Rosary

In the year 1422, a certain young man who had a reverent devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and always adorned her statue with a wreath of flowers, was admitted to the Order of Friars Minor.

Not being able to gather flowers and continue this practice in the novitiate, he decided to return to the world, but before leaving, he went to Mary's altar to beg her protection.

Our Lady then appeared to him and said, "Do not be sad and cast down because you are no longer permitted to place wreaths of flowers on my statue. I will teach you to change this pious practice into one that shall be far more pleasing to me and far more meritorious for your soul. In place of the flowers that soon wither and cannot always be found, you can weave for me a crown from the flowers of your prayers that will always remain fresh and are always available.

Recite one Our Father and ten Hail Mary's while recalling the seven joys I experienced. If you recite these prayers as I have directed, rest assured, dear son, you will weave for me a most beautiful and acceptable crown and will merit for yourself innumerable graces."

The novice began at once to pray as directed. Meanwhile, the novice master entered and saw an angel weaving a wreath of roses and after every tenth rose he inserted a golden lily. When the wreath was finished, he placed it on the youth's head.

The master then commanded the youth to tell him what he had been doing; and the novice explained he had been saying the rosary as the Blessed Virgin had instructed him to do.

As a result, the custom of reciting this crown of seven Our Fathers and 72 Hail Mary's, in honor of the 72 years which our Lady lived on earth, became widespread.



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LECTIO DIVINA (Sacred Reading)

1) Read (Lectio):

Read the Scripture passage through thoroughly.

2) Reflect (Meditatio):

Reflect upon what you have read. Ask yourself which word, which phrase, which passage speaks to you, challenges you, or tugs at your this day? Which word or passage got your attention this day? Sit with these words and allow them to penetrate your spirit.

3) Respond (Oratio):

How do you respond to the stirrings in your heart, your conscience? How does this passage challenge you to look upon the world? How does it effect your interactions with others? How does it change how you see yourself? God spoke to you; what is your response to God?

4) Receive (Contemplatio):

Sit in the silence; sit in the Presence of God; receive what it is that God is giving to you.

Remember: God's first language is Silence.

Section D: BSSF Formation Documents

Introduction and Welcoming

43	The Four Pillars of BSSF Region W/Application for Formators
51	Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi - <i>To be given during the Ceremony</i> <i>Introduction and Welcoming</i>
55	The Sponsor as an Agent of the Secular Franciscan Formation
58	<i>A Model of a Ceremony of Sponsorship</i>
60	Theological Reflections after Fraternity Apostolic Experiences
61	Discernment of a Secular Franciscan Vocation



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The FOUR PILLARS of BSSF Region

(To be given during the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming)

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

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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.

Original Document: September 2003 Source: The Holy Spirit

Instruments of the Holy Spirit: Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., Regional Spiritual Assistant; Audrey Binet, SFO, Regional Minister; Christine Washington, SFO, Regional Formation Director

Revised Document: June 2010 Source: The Holy Spirit

Instruments of the Holy Spirit: Fr. Linus DeSantis, OFM Conv., Regional Spiritual Assistant; Audrey Binet, SFO, Regional Councilor; Faye Martin, SFO, Regional Formation Director



Brothers & Sisters of St. Francis Region
Alabama • Georgia • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee

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.

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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 Communio 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)*

Original Document: September 2003 Source: The Holy Spirit

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The Spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi, *Elements of Franciscan Spirituality*

(To be given during the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming)

During his lifetime, thousands of men and women, cleric and lay, chose to follow the way of St. Francis. The influence of St. Francis on the people of his own day and on the people of every century since is immeasurable. What is it about St. Francis that millions have found so inviting, so inspiring?

What are the elements of Francis' spirituality?

By coming to understand the spirituality of St. Francis, we make available to ourselves a rich source of spiritual guidance and nourishment. The following are twelve elements of Franciscan Spirituality.

1. Incarnation:

"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Of all the doctrines of our Christian faith, Francis was most taken by the "Incarnation." Francis was overwhelmed by the condescension of God - that, out of love for sinful humanity, God took on human form. Francis saw Christ present in all of creation and in all people. He himself endeavored to live his life in imitation of Christ so that he could, likewise, manifest the presence of Christ to others. We see Francis' love for the Incarnation embodied in two common liturgical practices passed down through the centuries by his followers, the Christmas crèche and the Stations of the Cross. Franciscan Spirituality is deeply Incarnational. Franciscans seek to know, in a personal way, the person of the Risen Christ. They seek to find Him present in others, especially the poor, and they endeavor to live their lives in such a way as to render Him present through their words and actions.

How do I make His presence known through my words and actions?

Above all, Francis desired to imitate Christ. He did not want to imitate Jesus in just one area of life. He desired to imitate him in all things. He prayed even to experience the sufferings of Christ and was graced with the sacred stigmata, the wounds of Christ. On the night he died, Francis had his brothers read from John 13:1-17 the account of the Last Supper and the washing of feet. Francis wanted to recall Jesus' last night on earth as he was experiencing his own. This aspect to Franciscan Spirituality is rooted in Francis' love of the Incarnation and his belief that we must enflesh the love of God in the world. Franciscans endeavor to give birth to Christ in the world by imitating Him as closely as possible.

Can people tell by my words and actions that I am a follower of Christ? Name some concrete ways that I can imitate Christ in my daily life.

2. Love of the Eucharist:

Francis loved the Eucharist. Francis could often be found praying before the Blessed Sacrament. Whenever anyone would complain about a priest, he would exhort him or her to respect all priests, no matter how sinful they might be, because through their hands the all powerful, almighty God becomes present in our midst. His love for the Eucharist was rooted in his admiration of the humility of God. He was overwhelmed that God would deign to humble Himself and to become present to us under the form of simple bread and wine. Franciscan Spirituality is marked by a great devotion to Jesus present in the Eucharist. Francis would exhort us to attend Mass as often as possible and to receive Holy Communion regularly.

In what ways has the Eucharist transformed my life?

3. Love of Scripture:

Francis' love for the Holy Scriptures was deep. Once Francis discovered the Scriptures, he pursued them like a newfound treasure. Every religious order had to have a rule of life. Francis went so far as to proclaim, "The Rule of Life of the Friars Minor is the Gospels." He took the Bible, especially the Gospels, seriously. He was somewhat literal in his interpretation of the Gospels. If he had a decision to make and didn't know what to do, he would open the Bible, read what was there and do whatever it directed. ("Bible Roulette"). Franciscan Spirituality is characterized by devotion to the Word of God. Franciscans are called to study the Bible, reflect upon it and, most especially, to live it.

When was the last time I was challenged by words of scripture? Describe that experience.

4. Reliance upon the Holy Spirit:

Francis called the Holy Spirit "The Minister General of the Order." He believed that the Holy Spirit was guiding him and the Order. He relied upon the Holy Spirit and had total confidence that the Holy Spirit would never fail him. For Francis and for all Franciscans it is the Holy Spirit that inflames us to follow in the footprints of Jesus Christ. The prayer he offered his friars in his Letter to the entire Order expresses this well. "Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, grant us in our misery the grace to do for You alone what we know You want us to do, and always to desire what pleases You. Thus, inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened, and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ."

In what ways has the Holy Spirit guided me in the past? Describe the situation.

5. Devotion to the Mother of God:

Francis loved the mother of Jesus and entrusted the care of the Order to her. He called her the Queen of the Franciscan Order. He loved her because she was the Mother of God. Because of her willingness to say yes to God's call, Christ was born into the world. His respect and admiration for her was tremendous. The first friary was Our Lady of the Angels of the Portiuncula. He chose this place because it was dedicated to the Mother of Jesus. An important aspect of Franciscan Spirituality is a devotion to Mary. "Hail, O lady, Holy Queen, Mary, Holy Mother of God; you are the Virgin made church and the one chosen by the Most Holy Father in heaven whom He consecrated with His most Holy Beloved Son and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete in whom there was and is all the fullness of grace and every good. Hail, His palace! Hail, His tabernacle! Hail, His home! Hail, His robe! Hail, His servant! Hail, His mother!"

How does she serve as a model for my own pilgrimage of faith?

6. Dedication to Prayer:

Francis loved to pray. One of the earlier biographers of St. Francis wrote: "He was not so much a man of prayer as prayer personified." It is said that the friars would never dare interrupt Francis while he prayed. When he prayed he was like a starving man who had been given a piece of bread. Through prayer Francis experienced great intimacy and union with God. Francis wanted, at times, to be a hermit, to be a contemplative. But he also felt called to lead a life of service to God's people. So he struggled between the contemplative life and the active life. But he always exhorted his followers to pray and to find time for silence and meditation. It is through prayer that we are given the strength and grace we

need to do ministry. Among the prayers attributed to St. Francis, the better known are the “Peace Prayer” and the “Canticle of the Creatures.” A follower of Francis is a man or a woman of prayer. *In what ways does your personal prayer life impact the community?*

7. The Communal Life:

Francis recognized that we are all brothers and sisters and that we need one another. A hallmark of the Franciscan Order is the communal life. He believed that God had sent the men who came to follow him and so he would not refuse any of them entrance into the community. He told his friars, “If a mother loves her child how much more should spiritual brothers and sisters love and help one another.” Francis believed that Gospel living was communal living. He wanted his friars to live a common life which reflected the life of the early Christian depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. “The community of believers was of one heart and mind, and no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they had everything in common.” (Acts 4:32) Franciscan Spirituality is characterized by a love for community. Francis would encourage us to build caring communities. During his life he tried to recreate the warm, compassionate, loving communities of the early Church and he invites us to do the same. This aspect of Franciscan Spirituality calls us to love one another as brothers and sisters and to promote friendship and community with all people. It calls us to set aside prejudice and hatred and to be family with one another.

What attitude(s) or disposition(s) could I embrace to improve the quality of life in my community?

8. Poverty and Simplicity:

Francis chose “Lady Poverty” as his bride. He regarded it a privilege to live as a poor man because God Himself chose to be born in the poverty of a stable. He believed that wealth and possessions could easily become a hindrance to one’s relationship with God. For Francis, poverty and a simple life were the means to and the expression of total dependence upon God. Francis trusted completely that God would take care of him and the Order. Therefore, he forbade his friars from owning anything, from using money and from associating with the wealthy. Francis insisted that the friars dress simply in the garb of the poor and that they not be ashamed to beg. Francis’ desire to be poor was rooted in his desire to depend only on God. The prayer, which Francis prayed most often, has only five words in it: “My God and my All!” Franciscan Spirituality has, at its core, total dependence upon God. Today Francis would exhort us to remove from our lives anything that would hinder us from relying solely on God. Franciscan Spirituality stresses good stewardship of the gifts we have received, simplicity of life and love for and outreach to the poor. *What can I do to simplify my life?*

9. Humility:

Humility comes from the Latin word for “earth” and “on the ground.” To be humble means that one knows the truth not only of our earthly limitations but also of our divine giftedness. In humility, we have our feet planted on the ground, knowing our real state, which is complete dependence on the will of God, who gives us life, sustains us and loves us. Francis lived this spirit of humility. In one of his admonitions he wrote, “Blessed is the servant who esteems himself no better when he is praised and exalted by people than when he is considered worthless, simple, and despicable; for what a man is before God, that he is and nothing more.” Francis was acutely aware of his own sinfulness and spent his life mortifying his body and doing penance for his sins. At the same time, he rejoiced in the gift of redemption and the status we share with Christ as sons and daughters of God. His humility prompted Francis to name his Order, the Order of Friars Minor - the Lesser Brothers. Franciscans are called to live

the virtue of humility by being constantly aware that all we are and have is a gift from God and by doing all things, not for the praise of others, but rather for the glory and honor of God.

Name some concrete ways that I can practice the virtue of humility in my daily life.

10. A Joyful Spirit:

As a young man Francis was a “playboy.” He was very popular with his peers because he was jovial and funny. He had a joyful spirit. But at that point, he found his joy in parties and carousing. This all changed with his conversion. Francis fell in love with the Lord and desired to be the troubadour of God, singing His praises and spreading the Good News. His joyfulness was childlike and he often erupted spontaneously in song. Even in his suffering and pain at the end of his life, his spirit exuded the joy of the Lord. Interesting to note is that his famous canticle “The Canticle of Brother Sun” was written while he was blind and in great pain. Franciscan Spirituality is characterized by joyfulness. This joy is rooted in knowing that God loves us and makes himself present in creation, people and the sacraments of the Church.

How do I communicate the joy of God to my community?

11. Peace-Making:

When Francis was young he wanted to be a knight in shining armor. He wanted to fight battles and to be hailed as a hero. After his conversion he came to hate violence and fighting. He saw Jesus as a man of peace and wanted to imitate him in this regard. His love of poverty was partly rooted in the reality that most of the fighting and dissension between people was the result of envy and jealousy over money and property. St. Francis taught his companions to use the greeting: “The Lord give you peace!” He realized that quite often our words become realities. If we speak peaceably, we begin to feel peaceful. From this inner peace comes the courage and conviction to make God’s reign of peace present in our words, our work and our world. A popular prayer attributed to St. Francis is the “Peace Prayer.” Franciscans are called to be men and women of peace, non-violence and reconciliation in our families, Church, community and world. *In what ways do I practice peace making?*

12. Solidarity with All Creation:

Francis had an immense respect and love for all creation. His love for creation was superseded only by his love for the Creator. He often said, “Love creation but love the Creator more.” Francis believed in the solidarity of all creation. Francis proclaimed, “We are sister and brother to animals and plants, water and soil, earth and sky.” Just as we meet the painter in his art, the poet in her finely crafted words and the dancer in her dance, so Francis believed we encounter the Creator in all of creation. This aspect of Francis’ spirituality can be seen in the “Canticle of the Creatures”, written by Francis toward the end of his life. John Paul II declared Francis of Assisi the patron saint of ecology. Franciscan Spirituality must include a love for and dedication to the environment. In a world, which has great disregard for life, and values efficiency and convenience over care for the environment, followers of Francis are called to work for the conservation of natural resources and respect for all things of the earth.

In what ways do I practice conservation of the earth’s resources?



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THE SPONSOR AS AN AGENT OF SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION

Please use this document to develop the “Role of the Sponsor” for your fraternity, which will be given out during the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming

From the earliest days of the Order, Francis sent the brothers out two by two to preach the good news of repentance to any and all they met. As with other things in his life, Francis’ choice of two by two was Gospel-based. In his wisdom, he would probably have paired up an older member of the brotherhood with a newer member. In time, the pairs would all return and share the bounty or the sorrows of their missionary adventures.

Take time now and be present to one of these pairs. Imagine their journey. There would definitely be times of prayer; there’d be times of sharing the workings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. How they came to be drawn to this band of men following Francis of Assisi would certainly enter into the conversation. They would have asked each other questions they had concerning truths Francis had shared with them. As, they were preaching they would probably have shared their personal insights into the meaning of different Scripture passages. As they walked from town to town, the beauties of creation and how creation perfectly conforms to the will of God would have come to mind. After time together, they would even come to confide in each other the parts of this mendicant life they found hard to live. They would seek each other’s advice as to how to better live out poverty, chastity, obedience, charity, humility, penitence. They might even admonish the other as to how to better live this way of life. They would praise the goodness of God that had brought them to this point of their spiritual journey.

Would you think this sharing helped the brothers grow in their vocation? Would it have helped to form deeper bonds of unity within the community? Would it have caused stronger bonds of support between the brothers? This might have been one of Jesus’ original intents when sending the disciples out two by two. It was probably one of Francis’ ideas also.

How do we have this experience of companionship built into the Secular Franciscan Order today? In the role of Sponsor in the formation process, this role is alive and active. What is a Sponsor? Very basically, it is a journey companion: an active, professed member of the fraternity who chooses to walk the initial journey with a new Inquirer. What occurs between these two persons? Much the same as occurred on the imaginary journey we just walked with the original Friars Minor. These two persons share prayer, Scripture, how they came to this vocation, the teachings of this way of life, the movement of the Holy Spirit in their own lives. When asked, the professed member might offer points on how to better live the *Rule*. Inquirer and Sponsor share times of leisure with each other, as well as times of worship, times of being present to the creation that

surrounds them, times of opening up to God within and God they discover outside of themselves, and, of course, times of service to others. All in all, they share how this call to live the Gospel life in the manner of St Francis is exploding in their very being.

WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY TO BE A SPONSOR?

A love of your own Secular Franciscan vocation and a desire to share it
A willingness to be open to the Holy Spirit and to another
A desire to share God's goodness in your life with another
An openness to share your understanding and love of Saints Francis and Clare
A listening, discerning heart
A prayerful spirit
A sense of nurture for another's vocation
A lived experience of Sacred Scripture
A call to service
An appreciation of creation

How does this process begin? The particulars will vary from fraternity to fraternity. In some fraternities, the person who introduced the Inquirer to the Secular Franciscan way of life might be the Sponsor. In another case, the Fraternity Council could match up professed members with the Inquirer. In whatever way is chosen, the Sponsor is not chosen by the Inquirer. Your fraternity may have another manner in which to pair people. The mode of connecting one person with another can be as varied as there are fraternities.

Interaction is key to this process. Initial contact most times becomes the responsibility of the professed member. One scenario would be for the professed member to invite the Inquirer for a cup of coffee or, better still, breakfast one morning. And just begin the conversation: "I first heard about St Francis..." or "I was invited to consider a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order when ..." or "I saw a brochure or announcement in the bulletin that there was an open house at the fraternity meeting and I went..." or "I became interested when I read a life of St. Francis..." or "My spiritual director thought this might be a path for me to explore. ..." or "I can remember first hearing about St Francis when I was in the second grade..." Whatever your introduction to St. Francis and the Order, share it and then ask your partner to do the same.

What other avenues are there in this Sponsor relationship? Together you might try reading a biography or a book on Franciscan values and share your gleanings. You might watch a movie or see a play about Francis and share your insights. You might go to a Franciscan prayer service at your parish or a nearby Monastery of St Clare. During Lent, you might attend Stations together. You might set aside a time once a month to share Scripture and how a certain passage has affected your life. Be ready to answer any questions that might arise in the regular formation session and try to attend the sessions when you are able. Most of all be open to each other and the movement of the Holy Spirit. Allow the Spirit to guide your relationship, remembering that the Holy Spirit and the Inquirer are the primary agents of Formation. The rest of us, including the Fraternity, the Council, the Formation Director and Team, the Spiritual Assistant, and the Sponsor are present merely to help facilitate this awesome interaction.

Companions on the journey is a tradition that goes back to the very beginnings of the Franciscan Movement, a tradition that is rooted in the ministry of Jesus' earliest disciples, a tradition that enriches all who partake in it. Partaking in the role of Sponsor is being actively engaged in the formation process as a professed Secular Franciscan. It is accepting the invitation to journey with another, following our Lord Jesus Christ in the example set forth by St. Francis himself.

So, be adventurous! Take the first step! Encounter another on the Journey! Enjoy the benefits! Reap the rewards! Accept the role of formation Sponsor.



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CEREMONY OF SPONSORSHIP

MINISTER: Introduction to Ceremony

We celebrated the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming for _____.
Name

At this time, a professed member will be commissioned as Sponsor of an Inquirer.

FORMATION DIRECTOR: Calling of Inquirer(s) and Sponsor(s)

Would the Inquirer(s) please come forward?

Would the Sponsor(s) please come forward? Place your hand on the shoulder of your Inquirer.

Let us continue with a reading from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, 4:1-16 NAB *, that gives guidance for your journey. God's word is urging us to live to attain "Unity in the Body" by the grace given to each of us in our "Diversity of Gifts."

Unity in the Body

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord,
Urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received,
With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, Striving
to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:
One body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism;
One God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Diversity of Gifts

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

Therefore, it says:

"He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; He gave gifts to men." What
does "he ascended" mean

Except that he also descended* into the lower [regions] of the earth?

The one who descended* is also the one who ascended far above all the heavens, That
he might fill all things.

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists,
Others as pastors and teachers,*

To equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

Until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God,

To mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ,

So that we may no longer be infants,

Tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, From
their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming.

Rather, living the truth in love,

We should grow in every way into Him who is the head, Christ,
From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, With
the proper functioning of each part,
Brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

MINISTER: Response to Scripture Reading

All praise be Yours, Oh Lord, for the gift of community, which You have given to us. Today we stand firm before You, renewing our commitment to life in fraternity. We confidently ask for Your power and strength to help us bring about unity with creation, harmony among people, oneness with other Franciscans, and reconciliation with You.

FORMATION DIRECTOR: Role of Sponsor

(Each fraternity includes the responsibilities/description of the role of their sponsors)

What is the role of Sponsor? You have been chosen to share your Franciscan life with this Inquirer through prayer, study, apostolate, dialogue and leisure. Together you will experience the fullness of the Franciscan family, grow spiritually in God's presence and embrace living and proclaiming the Gospel in the spirit of our seraphic father, Saint Francis, and holy mother, Saint Clare. Are you ready and willing to become a "companion on the journey" for this Inquirer during Initial Formation?

SPONSOR(S): Response to Question

I am ready and willing. I promise to be a "companion on the journey" for _____.
Name(s)

INQUIRER(S): Response to Sponsor(s)

I am so blessed to continue my journey. I know that as you share your Franciscan life with me I will be even more blessed. Thank you for promising to be my "companion on the journey."

INQUIRER(S) AND SPONSOR(S): Closing Prayer

O God our Father,
We truly desire to live together as brothers and sisters In
the spirit of Francis and Clare.
Anoint us with Your spirit of love,
So that we may listen to one another and may find together That
oneness of mind and heart, which You have given us.
Let our lives together in fraternity express and bring about the Gospel life We
strive to achieve after the example of Francis and Clare.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

MINISTER: Conclusion of Ceremony

_____, we offer you our prayers and support during Initial Formation.
May God, in His unfailing love, be with you and bless you during your journey.

*...But Christian unity is more than adherence to a common belief. It is manifested in the exalted Christ's gifts to individuals to serve so as to make the community more Christ like.

*The "descent" of Christ refers more probably to the incarnation than to Christ's presence after His death in the world of the dead. *Evangelists: missionary preachers, not those who wrote gospels. Pastors and teachers: a single group in the Greek, shepherding congregations.



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THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS AFTER FRATERNITY APOSTOLIC EXPERIENCES

You may be familiar with the story of Brother Leo and St. Francis when St. Francis invited Brother Leo to accompany him on a journey. On this journey Francis was to preach. Brother Leo was delighted. As they went through the town Brother Leo waited with great anticipation. They came to the other end of town. Francis had not preached. Haltingly, Brother Leo asked Father Francis why he hadn't preached. Father Francis said, "Oh but Brother Leo we did." As we met and greeted the people of the town we shared our love and the peace of Christ. As we walked in harmony sharing our joy and praising God, we preached. So my sisters and brothers it is not always in what we do, but how we do it. Apostolic life for a Franciscan lies more in the cooperation, sharing and participation than in the act of doing. Not to minimize acts of charity but the Franciscan formula highlights the shared approach. So the preferred is that a community adopt an apostolic activity or activities in which each of the members can participate with their brothers and sisters in some creative way. This visible activity to make a difference in the world will attract people to the fraternity or group and the Secular Franciscan Order. Others will see how you as a Franciscan community minister together.

Practical Application:

Provide a time of "theological reflection" after each apostolic experience - verbal or written. Suggestion: Select perhaps three questions to reflect upon after an apostolic experience. The next experience you might reflect upon three different questions.

- What was done?
- What was the benefit of the experience?
- What was the result for those served and for you?
- What was the "feeling" in the giving?
- How was your service received?
- How were you present to the experience?
- How was Christ present?
- How did you minister to Christ?
- How did you, as Francis, receive the Christ and share the Christ?
- Did others see you as a Franciscan community ministering together?
- Was the community sensitive to the gifts and temperaments of its members?
- Are you coming to know each other at a deeper level?
- Are you sharing values, telling your story, telling about your relationships and working with others?
- Did you cooperate, share, truly listen, embrace change, respect the other and appreciate the person and the task?
- Did you communicate individuals working as a unit in peace and harmony?
- Was there mutual cooperation among the members?
- Was there sincere respect among the members?
- Was there generous sharing and energy expended?

- What was the experience in working and sharing the task with the other members?
- How were you, as Francis, one with your brothers and sisters?



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Discernment of a Secular Franciscan Vocation

By Anne Mulqueen, SFO

Although I can give you no perfect set of rules to follow, there are some **essential elements** that should be present in the life of a prospective member to the OFS. They are:

- (1) evidence of a life lived in harmony with the Spirit of God;
- (2) evidence of growth in Franciscan spirituality and the ability to make choices in harmony with the Gospels;
- (3) evidence of spiritual maturity and the ability to move beyond the need for certainty;
- (4) willingness to make a permanent commitment to the gospel way of life;
- (5) An ability to move forward without fully comprehending God's will, but simply asking, "God, what is my next step?"

The local fraternity is "*. . . the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.* The following attitudes and behavior have no place in a community of love.

These are some of the **major obstacles** to healthy fraternal life. It is important that the following obstacles be addressed as soon as they are observed for the good of the fraternity.

(1) Individualism and Competition

(2) Self-absorption

(3) Self-interest

(4) Ambition

(5) Self-righteousness

(6) Need to Control Others

Section E

National Formation Commission Documents

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LEADER GUIDE 5

The Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership
[To be used to help discern a Candidate's **suitability** for Profession]

NEED: How do we really know if a candidate is ready for profession?

SOURCES:

1. Matthew 7:24-27
2. Matthew 18: 15-20
3. Luke 9: 57-62
4. Galatians 6: 1-10
5. Thessalonians 5: 14-24
6. A Letter to a Minister ("Francis and Clare," edited by Regis Armstrong and Ignatius Brady- p.74)
7. Celano 75 ("Omnibus" p, 426)
8. The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order: Article 23
9. General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order: Articles 37-42
10. Guidelines for Initial Formation, pp.17-18

GOAL: The goal is for the local fraternity council to come to a mature discernment of the candidate's **suitability** for commitment to a Secular Franciscan way of life.

It must be noted that this commitment is a normal Christian commitment, flowing out of the baptismal commitment that all Catholics have already professed. While it is an important step in the spiritual life, it is not one that requires a superhuman effort that few are called to. On the other hand, even ~normal~ Christian vocation is by its nature radical, and always carries with it a personal commitment to conversion of life and mature holiness. This means that special caution must be taken with candidates who present themselves from two extreme positions:

1. The candidate who says in words or behavior, "I am too sinful to be a Secular Franciscan; I am not worthy."
2. The candidate who expresses readiness (or even eagerness) for a Secular Franciscan commitment, but whose understanding of the commitment, level of human and spiritual maturity, or style of life raises serious reservations as to present suitability.

This goal must be addressed, therefore, first from the standpoint of the typical candidate, who lies within the “normal” range, and then from the stand point of each of our two extreme positions.

MEANS: In terms of profession, there are two decisions that are being made simultaneously. The first decision belongs to the candidate. “Is the Secular Franciscan way of life for me?” It must be recognized that this is a different question than “am I called to a Franciscan spirituality?” This latter question is one of personal preference and spiritual nuance. The former question, however, addresses a specific spiritual context that is not only personal but also communal, and carries with it certain expectations and responsibilities.

The second decision, therefore, is a community decision, undertaken by the fraternity council in the name of the entire fraternity. The question is “Can this candidate live a Secular Franciscan way of life? Can he or she do it in this historical context with these brothers and sisters?” There is really no way for the council members to shirk this task. The fraternity members are responsible for and to one another; and the life, strength, and growth of any Franciscan community is only as strong as the sum of its membership.

The fraternity council never undertakes this discernment of a candidate's suitability lightly. Even absolute pronouncements from council members, such as “Oh, I think anyone who wants to be a Secular Franciscan should be allowed to,” do not usually reflect a flippant attitude. They usually arise from the council member's profound sense of his or her own limitations in the face of the gravity of the responsibility this decision requires.

By and large, the council's discernment is made easy by the very people who seek to be Secular Franciscans. They are usually Christian men and women somewhere in the process of human and spiritual maturation, who take the Gospel call to discipleship seriously and seek to actualize it in their lives in terms of how they presently understand it. They are far from idealized perfection, but they are willing to openly explore what ongoing Christian conversion means to them in practical terms. They have some sense of the demands, the gifts, and the responsibilities of Christian community. And they are committed to developing a strong relationship with God in prayer and action.

Generally speaking it is a sense of perfectionism that makes some candidates assume the position of “I am not worthy.” If worthiness were one of the criteria for Secular Franciscanism, there would be very few candidates indeed. However, perfectionism is only half the problem. This is usually coupled in such candidates with a relatively low sense of self esteem. “Not only do I feel that I am far from the Christian ideal, but I feel almost everyone else is much further along.”

Often the rest of the fraternity sees such candidates as having tremendous promise, and it is a source of frustration that they seem unable to overcome this obstacle in their progress toward commitment. Sometimes pointing out the realities to the candidate is sufficient, but sometimes the lack of self-esteem is present to the degree that the candidate almost seems unwilling or even hostile toward viewing himself or herself more realistically. This could point to a deeper and more pervasive problem, and forcing the issue might be counter- productive. While such candidates might be encouraged to seek some help in counseling or spiritual

direction, it might be beneficial to them and to the fraternity if they wait until they feel more prepared to move toward profession.

In terms of the kind of pastoral decisions the fraternity council must make, candidates at the other extreme are more problematic. In the above instance, whatever the final decision, it is likely that all parties will eventually come to an agreement. At the other end of the spectrum, however, it is quite possible that the council's decision will result in anger, hostility, and even divisiveness. Council members often find themselves cast, usually unwittingly, in various kinds of parental roles either by the candidate or by other fraternity members. And they might find themselves divided in regard to the best choice of action.

The reasons a particular candidate might be recognized as unsuitable for profession are too numerous and complex to address here. If such a decision seems warranted by the council, it is recommended that certain factors be considered:

1. Even though the Constitutions require that the decision for admission to profession be done by secret ballot (Art. 41.1), discernment of candidates' requests must take place in an open, trusting, and forthright atmosphere. All the factors involved must be brought to the council's attention. Hoping someone else will bring up a difficult area will only lead to problems down the road.
2. Remember that truth and compassion must always interact with each other, and to leave either out of the council's discernment is done at great risk.
3. In the council members' interactions with one another, with the candidate, and with other fraternity members, all manipulations, even well intended ones, should be avoided. Honesty and openness are essential (Mt. 5:33-37).
4. Do not be afraid to seek outside confidential advice from pastors, spiritual directors, or other appropriate individuals. Without violating norms of confidentiality, important input for the council's discernment can be made available. Also pastoral advice as to the council's procedure for disseminating its decision can be offered.
5. Clearly document the reasons why the candidate's request for profession is being denied. This is a communal order, and its members must be capable of participating fully in the community, both with their time and ability. Be as specific as possible, even in regard to specific actions and statements on the candidate's part. Directness while difficult will be better appreciated by all in the long run, and vagueness is practically always counterproductive.
6. When possible, it is best that the council comes to a clear agreement as to its course of action. A united voice will be better received by the candidate, as well as by the rest of the fraternity. Leaving a "sacrificial lamb" to present or explain the decision is unfair to all the parties involved.



THE HISTORY OF THE SFO AND OF ITS RULE

[Taken from a power point presentation received from National Formation Commission]

The Essential Role of History in Formation

History

- Brings us back to the roots and to the source of the grace associated to the project revealed by God to Saint Francis
- Puts us in a line of continuity with those who have preceded us in the same Vocation
- Allows us to verify if the “deposit” of vocation, charism and mission has been modified, by altering its original purpose and authenticity.
- Teaches us the errors of the past in order not to commit them again;
- Allows us to learn about so many brothers and sisters who have lived before us and have incarnated at best the ideal and can help us imitate their example.
- Teaches us to re-interpret in the various historical-social-political times, the vocation and mission in order not to live outside of our own time though remaining faithful to the original vocation and project.

Knowing our roots means to become capable of shaping the history, the same that God wants to make, with Him for and with the brothers.

The “Novitas Franciscana”

Most salient points:

- Francis restored the Church by giving full citizenship to all components of the human and ecclesial family (clergy, men and women, religious and lay) for the diffusion of the Gospel of Christ.
- New form of religious life, the apostolic one, which completed and integrated the already existing ones (monks, hermits and canons).
- The contemplative monastic female life, with Clare of Assisi, finds a new expression, the “Franciscan” one, characterized by absolute poverty.
- The penitential movement finds new energy and an exceptional charism, Francis’ charism, to fill every corner of the earth and of human activities with the Gospel of Christ.
- The religious Profession is restored back into its value of an individual pact of nuptial alliance, personally made with Christ.

- The itinerancy of the announcement is restored and, like Christ with his apostles, Francis sets out with his first companions to the roads of the whole world.
- Fraternity, an essential evangelical value for anyone who wants to sincerely follow Jesus, is taken up by Francis as an absolute central and foundational element in his life.
- The centralized Franciscan structure (minister general, ministers provincial, guardians) directly at the service of the universal Church: an apostolic Fraternity for the whole world, not linked to the territory, and directly dependent from the Sovereign Pontiff.
- The announcement of the Word is entrusted to both clerics and lay.
- The Crucifix of Saint Damian confers a mission to Francis: *“Francis, go and restore my House which, as you can see is falling into ruins”*.
- In order to fulfill the mission, Christ worked in him *“a marvelous operation”* by assimilating him to Himself in life and in death (FF 1240); and in order to continue the mission he generated to him a triple host (FF 1031).
- All three Orders generated by Francis are the heirs of the mission and of the charism to accomplish it: the Franciscan trilogy.

Francis and his spiritual Family exist to fulfill this particular mission-

- The Order of Penitents is as old the Church itself. The new penitents wanted, however, to bind their penitential renewal to the name and spirituality of St. Francis. The Order of the Franciscan Penitents blossoms in the hands of St. Francis.
- The Franciscan penitents assume the typical characteristics which is the secular projection of the religious apostolic experience of St. Francis, just as the Poor Clares are the same projection in the monastic female world.
- The secular Franciscans, though not “religious” in the strict sense, commit themselves by a true and authentic “religious” Profession to give witness to the salvation bearing novelty of the Gospel, by associating themselves to the apostolate of the Friars of the First Order and to the contemplation of the Poor Clares religious.
- Ultimately, St. Francis has given to his three Orders only one Rule: a more perfect observance of the Gospel, according to the state of life.

The “Order of Penitence” in history

- The Conversion - penance -metànòia: to turn one’s back to sin to return to the original state of friendship with God according to the teaching of Jesus (metanòeite) to reach a full conformance to Christ.
- The penitential movement is related to the evolution the legislation and practice of the Church to obtain forgiveness of sin after Baptism.

III and IV centuries

- Penance after Baptism was “one and only” and considered as a “second baptism”: just as baptism was not repeated, it was impossible to repeat absolution and penance!
- Penitents were excluded from Eucharist. It could be received only after atonement.
- The sinner was “admitted” to Penance by a liturgical ceremony and by the imposition of the hands, he was accepted into the “Order of Penance”.
- The bishops were very cautious to admit penitents and the penitents themselves chose not to enter into the state of penance, waiting until they were old or about to die to receive their penance.

V century. - Voluntary Penance begins.

Even if not “sinners”, some faithful enter spontaneously into the “Order of Penance” out of their love for perfection and submit themselves voluntarily to the penitential legislation remaining into the Order for their whole life.

The Time of Francis and the Beginning of the Order of the Penitents of St. Francis

- Francis, after having received the confirmation from the Pope to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel, begins his public preaching and the results are overwhelming.
- Immediate exponential increase of those who bound themselves to the new laws of penitence especially from 1215, year in which Francis writes his first Forma Vitae for his penitents (Letter to the Faithful - First edition, Prologue of our present Rule).
- Francis had no intention to institute any religious Order. In the ordination of his 3 Orders St. Francis let the Spirit of the Lord to be his only guide. This reality blossomed into his hands, without any pre-established “project”.
- Francis realized that these three Orders (each one according to its condition) were related to his apostolic mission to restore the House of the Lord. And “...the Third Order, born from the teachings of Francis, was born juridically fully autonomous with respect to the First and to the Second Order.”

Approval of the Order of Penitents of St. Francis **The Rule of the Order of Franciscan Penitents**

- “The constitutional approval” of the Third Franciscan Order does not coincide with the Bull “Supra Montem” of August 18 of 1289 of Nicholas IV, as if it were produced by the promulgation of the new Rule of the Third Order Secular of Saint Francis.

- An approval on the basis of the existing juridical principles is witnessed by the Legend of the Three Companions, which recites as follows: ... “Each of these three Orders was approved, in its own time, by the sovereign Pontiff.” (FF 1472; LTC 60).
- Saint Francis is truly the Founder of his unique Franciscan “Third Order”.
This is attested by several official documents and, of course by the same Rule “Supra Montem” of 1289:

“In nomine Domini, Incipit regula et modus vivendi fratrum et sororum ordinis continentium sive de penitentia, institutus a beato Francisco anno Domini MCCXXI...”

- Francis, just as he did for the First Order, wrote for his penitents a form of life made up of simple words inspired by the Gospel. Francis had already written a project of life for the Friars and had presented it to Innocent III. We have no copy of such first Rule. However the approval of Innocent III and the mandate of preaching penance have never been questioned!

The 1st.Letter to the Faithful (Recensio Prior) is our First Rule.

It contains 5 fundamental elements to lead a true penitential life entirely dedicated to God:

1. To love the Lord
2. To love one’s neighbor
3. To hate sins and whatever is against the spirit
4. To receive the Body of the Lord
5. To bear worthy fruits of penance

The realization of this simple form of life effectively introduces us into the divine life, a life of sharing into the Holy Trinity as Francis himself says and guarantees with extreme clarity, strength and authority:

- The Spirit of the Lord will rest on the penitents and will dwell in them
- We are children of the Heavenly Father (by doing His will)
- In the Spirit we are united to Jesus
- We become spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus
- We carry Him in our heart and we generate Him by our holy works

This is truly our PROTO REGULA (Very First Rule)

This very text was placed as the Prologue of our present Rule, in order to underline the ideal and substantial continuity of the new Rule with its original source.

The Rule of the Order of the Franciscan Penitents

1221

- Francis prepares a Second text for his penitents: Letter to all the Faithful (Second edition). The purpose: maintaining the movement in a full orthodoxy to avoid heretical positions and mark some firm points on abuses that may have occurred.

Cardinal Ugolino (future Gregory IX) introduces the Memoriale Propositi.

- Framework-Law for all penitents, in the light of the Lateran Council IV. Memoriale Propositi contemplates the possibility of “personalizing” some aspects which are specific to the various penitential groups.
- Memoriale Propositi was never formally approved by the sovereign Pontiffs. The penitential obligations were already well known and codified by Master Gratian (1140). The voluntary state of Penitence had been canonically recognized for centuries.
- Exhortative and “form of life” character of the Proto Regula with respect to the more juridical character of Memoriale Propositi. Biblical contents and references in the Proto- Regula as opposed to the Memoriale Propositi which has none.
- “The Memorial expresses a Franciscan way to penance to the extent in which it is read in the light and under the lens of the Second Letter to the Penitents.” (Robert Stewart OFM)

The Regula Bullata of the Franciscan Penitents

- 1274. The Lyon Council established that all Orders founded after the IV Lateran Council which had not yet received a formal approval from the Holy See had to be suppressed.
- The penitents of Saint Francis had been approved by the Pope but they did not have a Rule formally approved by the Pope. Consequently they feared to be suppressed.
- Promoters, coordinators and presenters of an official Rule were two secular Franciscans: the judge Ugolino de’ Medici di Ferrara and his brother Elia (executor Italiae).
- The Rule “Supra Montem” of the Brothers and Sisters of Penitence of Saint Francis is the fruit of the work and initiative of the same Secular Franciscans.
- The Regula Bullata of the Order of Penitents of Saint Francis of 18 Agosto 1289, emanated by the first Franciscan Pope, Girolamo D’Ascoli, who took the name of Nicholas IV. This is the Rule to which we refer as “Supra Montem”.
- The Rule did not contemplate a centralized structure, as the penitents had requested. Despite this we know that they elected just the same their own ministers provincial! A centralized structure had always been opposed by the Franciscan religious.
- The name “third order” for the Franciscan penitents, begins to be used at the end of the 13th century. The Franciscan Penitents never loved this definition and resisted it.

THE ORDER FROM THE PROMULGATION OF THE “SUPRA MONTEM”.

14th century and 15th century: there are ups and downs concerning the position of the Popes with the respect to the Penitents until 1471.

END OF AUTONOMY AND BEGINNING OF “OBEDIENTIALITY”

Sixtus IV, Franciscan Pope, with “Romani Pontificis Providentia” submits the brothers and sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis to the regime of Friars Minor.

- The Pope grants “superiority, power and authority on the minister and on the friars of the third order of penance”, even though this was contrary to the origin, the history and the nature of the Order of Penance and of the Order of Friars Minor and to the will of Saint Francis, father and founder of both Orders.
- The penitents are no longer a subject of rights and duties in the Church and become an object, disputed by several parties who wanted them as their own.
- “With Sixtus IV ends a period, that of the laborious autonomy of the Order of Penance, and a new one starts, in which the new name of «third order» assumes its entire meaning of accessory, of dependence, of appendage of the First Order.”

THIS PAPAL BULL HAS REGULATED ALL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRST AND THE THIRD ORDER UNTIL THE TIME OF THE RULE OF PAUL VI.

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LOSS OF THE “RELIGIOUS” AND “ECCLESIASTICAL” STATUS

Shortly after, following the V Lateran Council (1512-1517), with Leo X, the Franciscan penitents lost also their qualification as “religious persons” and “ecclesiastical persons” with all the privileges that went with them.

- Religious at the time of Francis were: those who assumed in their life a new religious commitment in addition to the baptismal obligations, and not only those who lived according to the norm of a *regulare propositum* (hermits, canons regular, monks and apostolic religious).
- Therefore, at the time of Francis, the three classical vows were not the only conditions to be considered «religious». What counted was having made the Profession to follow a certain Rule, having embraced an approved Form of Religious Life.
- Ecclesiastical Person was a person who was subtracted from the “civil authority” and responded directly to the “ecclesiastical authority”.

Secular Franciscans belonged to this group.

- Today this problem does not exist. Secular Franciscans are secular and lay, in the fullest sense, who has entered into a perpetual “religious” life commitment. However, at that time, this “degradation” did not have ecclesiological reasons but it was the fruit of compromise, between the ecclesiastical authorities and the Friars Minor.
- Today, we are fully aware that our being lay and secular is a constitutional essential element to be what we have to be in order to fulfill the project that God has entrusted to Francis and to his religious Family.

The Urbanian and the Innocentian Constitutions

- 17th century: the various religious Franciscan families consolidate their “own” third order by writing up their own constitutions.
- The Conventuals with the “Urbanian Constitutions” of 1628. The Observants with the “Innocentian Constitutions” of 1609, 1621 1686 first developed in Spain and then extended to the whole world.
- Such Constitutions were not always in harmony with the Rule of Nicholas IV: «The copies of this Rule were very rare and in its translation “for the understanding of the illiterate”, they carefully avoided to underline the discordances».
- The cult and devotional aspects are intensified. The absolute dependence of the third order from the first is strongly enforced. Fraternity meetings are presided over by the Guardian. In his absence all decisions are invalid. All forms of internal government are abolished: no more chapters, contacts between fraternities, the elections are reserved to the Guardian and are no longer by universal suffrage.

- The Order starts to become a place for princes, nobles and illustrious people, whereas, somehow poorer and lower class people are discriminated.
- It is allowed not to wear an external habit and to wear instead a scapular and a small cord. This was to accommodate the needs of the nobles and reigning class who did not want to wear externally the penance habits.

The Order starts growing outside Europe

- With the substantial decline in Europe, starts a growth in the other continents: in the Americas (Christopher Columbus was a Franciscan tertiary) and in Asia (in Japan we have the 17 tertiaries martyrs in 1597).
- In these countries, the composition of the Fraternities was balanced and included all social classes, in most cases there were no discriminations of color or race.

THE “MODERN WORLD”

- 1700 and 1800 : suppression of religious orders including the Third Order (Austrian-Hungarian Empire, France, Italy etc.) Decline of the Third Order. Beginning of the great social and political upheavals: Industrial Revolution (1760-1830), French Revolution (1789), October Revolution (Russia - 1917).
- Vision of the world that tends to do without God - Secularization of society and of social and political structures. On one hand the world rejects more and more the Church, on the other, the Church seems to reject the world.
- In Europe the tertiaries withdraw in clandestinity (France) or they organize themselves into private societies (Spain, Italy).
- The tertiaries though remained without the guide of the friars, expelled by the governments, showed an extraordinary vitality and resisted even for centuries in isolation.

Things start to change around the end of the 19th century.

- The friars of every family, as soon as possible, did their best to reorganize the Third Order. Strong encouragement of Pope Pius IX (1846-1878), the first of an uninterrupted series of 7 Secular Franciscan Popes: “Propagate, propagate the Third Order. You cannot imagine the wealth of good that it will produce”.

From this moment, the Apostolic See assumes an essential and prophetic role, to recover the true nature, mission and charism of the Secular Franciscan Order.

THE TIME OF LEO XIII (1878-1903) -FranciscanTertiary.

- His conviction:

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Only the Franciscan Third Order, lived in its genuine spirit, could have saved a society afflicted by so many individual and social problems.

This is the specific Mission that the Pope wants to entrust to the TOF.

- Leo XIII continuously repeated to the bishops the exhortation to personally join and to have as many faithful as possible join the Third Order.

Leo XIII managed to impart an, otherwise unexpected, impulse to the diffusion of the OFS and to the secular Franciscan apostolate between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries.

Encyclical «Auspicato concessum» on the occasion of the VII centenary of the birth of Saint Francis.

Sentences of the Pope:

«I am thoroughly convinced that by the work of the Third Order and the diffusion of the Franciscan spirit we will be able to save the world». «The Franciscan tertiaries... Are my beloved children... I want to save France through the Third Order».

“The Third Order, just as it did at the time of Saint Francis, must now spiritually regenerate mankind».

The “New” Leonine Rule: “Misericors Dei Filius” (30 May 1883)

This Rule, the second after the one of 1289, has mostly a prescriptive character and appears considerably simplified with respect to the previous one, so as to facilitate the adhesion of the largest possible number of faithful.

For this very reason the Rule of Nicholas IV had not been abrogated.

I promise to observe the Rule of the Third Order, instituted by the same Blessed Father Francis, according to the form approved by the Sovereign Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII.

The 20 chapters of the Supra Montem were reduced to only 3. These are the most salient points:

- It encourages “youthfulness” in character to the Third Order setting the age for admission to only 14 years.
- The full habit is no longer prescribed, only the scapular and the cord under the dress.
- The prohibition of dangerous shows is maintained.
- Abstinence from meat, which in the old rule was mandatory 4 days a week are reduced to the only day of Friday.

- Fasting stays only for all Fridays and the vigil of the Immaculate and St. Francis.
- Confession and communion is mandatory on a monthly basis, and not 3 times a year as it was in the past.
- There is no longer any prohibition to carry weapons.
- The seven canonical hours or the 12 Pater and Gloria for matins and 7 for each of the other canonical hours are now reduced to 12 Pater, Ave e Gloria for the whole day.
- The visit is no longer requested, as it was prescribed in the Nicholas IV Rule and as it is again now with the new Rule of Paul VI, but is imposed «ex officio».

The response of the Third Order to the Magisterial of Leo XIII was excellent in the short period, however this propulsive thrust considerably weakened due to the resistances to the leonine reformation and due to the reaction to “modernism”.

LEON HARMEL AND THE CONGRESS SEASON

- Leon Harmel, industrialist from Val-des-Bois, in the diocese of Reims, became a privileged collaborator of Pope Leo XIII in his project for a rebirth of the OFS and for the accomplishment of the mission he wanted to entrust the OFS.
- Leon Harmel has a fundamental influence in the inauguration of an unprecedented and fruitful season of TOF Congresses, which proved to be essential to recover the nature and identity of the OFS and to gain a sense of awareness of the unity of the Order.

We quote the most important:

- First French National Congress (September 1894): prevailing social orientation.
- Themes treated: nature, scope, organization of fraternities, inner life, presence in the Church, and works of charity.
- First Congress in Italy (September 1894). Themes treated : nature and scope of the TOF, its “modern social action”
- International Congress (Rome, October 1900), promoted by the Ministers General OFM, OFM Conv., OFM Cap., and TOR. 17.000 tertiaries participated, according to the accounts of the time.
- Themes: scope of the Third Order, its life and the ways to spread it.
- In the Congresses two tendencies prevailed, that of:
 - “the individualists who intended to maintain for the Third Order a character of an Association tending to Christian perfection and
 - “the socials” who, without neglecting the fundamental point of Christian perfection, wanted to direct the activity of the tertiaries in the social area, according to the directives of the Holy Father”.

PIUS X - Franciscan Tertiary.

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We remember under his pontificate two facts of greater importance:

- The project of federation of the various Fraternities.
The Federation of the Fraternities appeared a first necessary step towards unity of OFS. First historical step toward interobedentiality, which however could not start yet. Substantial divergences among the parties involved caused the disapproval of the Pope and the project was stopped.
- In 1912, Pius X addressed to the Ministers general of the First Order the Letter

“Tertium Franciscanum Ordinem”

Strong reaffirmation that “the government of the Third Order belongs to the religious of the First Order”, who are “masters and chiefs (duci)” of the tertiaries. Prohibition with no exceptions the “Fraternities of the Third Order as such” “become involved in civil or purely economic matters”.

During those years, the “dream” of shaping the Third Order into great spiritual and social renovation movements failed and the TOF showed that it was not capable to respond to the projects conceived by Leo XIII.

The new imprint deriving from the strict application of the papal norms characterized the Fraternities more and more as the projection of religious life in the world, with an increasing risk of creating “quasi-religious secular friars” and to reinforce the never disappeared devotionalism.

BENEDICT XV - Franciscan Tertiary.

- The seventh centenary of the Third Order was celebrated under the pontificate of Benedict XV
 - Publication of the Encyclical *Sacra propediem* (Jan.-1,1921), the only Encyclical Entirely dedicated to the Secular Order by a Pope in modern history.
 - Celebration of the Second International Congress, in Rome 15-18 September 1921.
- Within the Encyclical it is worth underlining the definition of TOF as *ORDO VERI NOMINIS* (True Order, often quoted in the OFS literature).

PIUS XI - Franciscan Tertiary.

- 1926 - Encyclical *Rite expiates* in the Anniversary of the transit of Saint Francis. Much space is dedicated to the Third Order.
- He recognizes to laity an ecclesial status corresponding to the baptismal dignity of all faithful: beginning of a new theology of laity and of new orientation on lay associations.

- His statement: “the profession of life of a good Franciscan Tertiary is not the rigor of the vows, is not the life in community, or the religious life according to the letter. But it is the life according to the spirit. It is the spirit of that life and of that perfection applied in the family, in the ordinary everyday life in the world”.

He then recalled the duty of re-qualification:

- “If they are Christian faithful just as anybody else, there is no reason for them to be Tertiaries... The denomination of Franciscan Tertiaries is a special one: ... Such denomination cannot be usurped- and it would be so - if something special does not correspond to it”.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF 1950

- 1950 - HOLY YEAR, Rome - International Congress of Lay Leaders of the Franciscan Third Order. 2000 participants: 15 nations and 7 linguistic areas. First true interobediential event. Interobedientiality, coming from above - Reflection on the ways to live as seculars the Franciscan charism.
- Among the conclusive vote there was the request that “in addition to the Local Councils be constituted as soon as possible district, provincial, national and international Councils”; Formal request to receive some General Constitutions.
- From September 1946 started, ad experimentum, the Interobediential International Council, wanted by the Ministers General of the First Order and TOR and formed by the four TOF religious Commissaries general.

PIUS XII and the GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS OF 1957

- Pope Pius XII was also a Franciscan Tertiary
 - Precise and paternally firm recognition of the reasons which lead the Third Order to the present “organic standstill” and to a “spiritual cooling”.
 - Clear indication of a renewal program, with precise theological foundations, in order to allow the secular Fraternity to make a substantial qualitative improvement to become “school of Christian perfection, of genuine Franciscan spirit, of prompt and courageous action for the edification of the Body of Christ”.
- The General Constitutions were elaborated between 1952 and 1957. The 1957 Constitutions are one of the most ample and complete legislative text of the OFS.

PAUL VI AND THE PAULINE RULE OF 1978: “SERAPHICUS PATRIARCHA” FRUIT OF THE II VATICAN COUNCIL

- The updating process of the Rule started in November 1965 by collecting suggestions and proposals from the whole world. The Franciscans from 24 countries responded: France, Spain,

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- Portugal, Brazil, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, Germany, Italy, Peru, Colombia, Poland, Yugoslavia, Japan, Philippine, Belgium, Canada, United States, Mexico, Rhodesia, United Kingdom, Ireland, Austria, Canada.
- All responses were analyzed in an interobediential meeting in Assisi in January 1968. However ... in this meeting no Secular Franciscan was present!!!
- Interobediential Secretariat (2 Secular Franciscans per “obedience”): Fausta Casolini, Anna Cesari, Lucia Mattei, Vincent McAloon, Augusto Natali, Lidia Petroli, Riccardo Ricci, Stefano Ricciardi.
- First draft July 1968 sent to all tertiaries and directors of the world. It was not well received.
- International Interobediential Congress in Assisi 27 September to 3 October 1969, called by the Commissaries General. A Presidency is appointed. Among them there are also:
 - Fr. Leon Bedrune OFM Secretary General.
 - Manuela Mattioli President of the newly formed TOF International Interobediential Council.

Several redactions were prepared:

- From the Basic Text of 1974 we passed to the Redaction of 1975, sent to the National Council of the entire world.
- September 1976, the Presidency of the International Interobediential Council decided to form a “Local Commission”, consisting of 5 lay and 2 religious, to prepare a new text of the Rule.
- The new text was given to a group of 4 experts (Ludovico Cava OFM Conv., Lazaro Iriarte OFM Cap., Atanasio Matanic OFM, and Francesco Provenzano TOR) to examine the text from the point of view of canon law, history, theology and Franciscan spirituality.
- An International Commission gathered in Rome prepared, in April 1977, the final redaction.
- The Ministers General introduced some minor modifications and added an Introductory Chapter, the Prologue, first letter of Saint Francis to the Faithful Penitents and sent the text for its final approval by the Congregation of the Religious.
- The Congregation suggested some corrections and introduced Article 3 which offers a synthesis of continuity with all the previous Rules and place The Rule under the direct responsibility of the Holy See.
- As we all know, at last, the beloved Paul VI donated us the new Rule on June 24, 1978. The General Assistants presented it to the Ministers General for

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Other essential moments of the legislative update are represented by

- The new Ritual of the OFS (Congregation of Divine Cult, 9 March 1985);
- The General Constitutions (Congregation IVCSVA 8 December 2000 - ad ex. 1990)
- The Statute of the International Fraternity (OFS General Chapter - November 2002)

The Rule, then, received a new confirmation and authentic comment by Pope John Paul II in his speech to the participants in the OFS International Congress, on September 27, 1982:

“The Rule is an authentic treasure in your hands, tuned up with the Spirit of the II Vatican Council and fully responding to what the Church expects from you. Love, study and live this Rule of yours, because the values it contains are eminently evangelical. Do live these values in Fraternity and live them in the world, in which, for your own vocation, you are deeply involved and rooted”.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Franciscan Order of secular Penitents has had in the course of history a complex life at least as complex as that of the rest of the Family, aggravated by the fact that for 5 centuries, as we have explained, the Order did not have the possibility to express itself as such, due to the absolute dependence from the religious.
2. After a period of initial great effervescence and generous work lasted about two centuries from its foundation, the Order lived a period of substantial standstill with ups and downs.
3. From 1471 onwards, secular Franciscans were subjected to religious and gradually were no more the protagonists of their own history and to a certain extent even of their own mission. The Third Order suffered the consequences of the problems which were created and lived by the religious of the First Order and of the sense of superiority of religious and clerics over lay faithful.
4. The lack of recognition of its autonomy and structural unity, necessary to assume in full its proper role, had a determining effect in the incapacity of the Order to be aware of its nature and mission and to significantly contribute to the mission of the Franciscan Family.
5. Until 1978 (and beyond), secular Franciscans have been often considered by the religious not so much as brother having the same dignity, instituted and coordinated for the very same apostolic mission in the Church and in the world (*Novitas*), but as simple passive object of catechesis and exhortation to be only good *christifideles laici* with a smattering of Franciscan devotion.
6. During too long a time, Secular Franciscan Spirituality, typical of Secular Franciscanism, distinct and complementary to that of the religious, did not have the concrete possibility to assert itself as such and, quite the contrary; much energy was spent to homologate Seculars to Spiritualities borrowed from the obediencial components to which the Seculars were subjected.
7. The reflection on the *Novitas francescana* helps us understand the context of grace in which the vocation of Saint Francis was born and the origin of his Family which was ordained in order to accomplish the mission that God had entrusted to Francis forever.

8. In the light of this awareness, we can fully appraise to what an extent, several times, the Family has failed to accomplish the mission, substantially betraying the charism of the origins. It is, therefore, very important for us to be focused on these fundamental parameters to faithfully serve the original project.
9. The Mission aiming to the restoration of the Church of Jesus Christ, to be accomplished with the contribution of all the Family components, according to the project entrusted by God to Francis, has rested for too long only on the shoulders of only the First and Second Order (and not always satisfactorily), lacking that stability that the “third component” should have provided, that of a mature, adult SFO, capable to take up its part of the mission.
10. The cord has not always been capable of sustaining the burden that had to carry. “*Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur*” (Qo 4, 12): a three-ply cord is not easily broken! We must, therefore, in the regained unity and autonomy, revive solidity to this Franciscan “cord” to enable it to fulfill completely its essential role in the Church.
11. Without the Seculars (who represent by far the largest majority of the Franciscans), who live fully immersed in the things of the world (Paul VI), it is impossible for the Family to successfully convert and restore the world in Christ in its most remote and vital parts. The misconception on the superiority of state which has contributed to consider secular
12. Franciscans and second class Franciscans, rests also on a wrong understanding of the famous expression *exire de saeculo*.
13. Francis did not “leave the world” when he became a “tonsured friar” but when he had entered into a permanent state of conversion, and thus, when he was still completely “lay”. *Exire de saeculo* means to enter into the logic of God and to abandon the way of thinking of the world. It means being in the world without belonging to the world, just as Saint John intended it.
14. God so loved the world that He gave his only Son (Jn3, 16)! God loves the world that He has created; this world carries within itself, necessarily, also the holiness deriving from being His creature, and creature loved by God! The world is the place where God realizes his project of LOVE for all his creatures, and history is the place where every creature discovers God and His Love and where, by the essential sharing of the world into the “humanity” of Christ, takes place the “deification” of man.
15. There are no spaces reserved for few chosen ones (clergy and religious). All spaces must be sanctified, and everything must be restored in Christ and in Him, everything must return to the Father. All baptized share into the same prophetic, priestly and kingly ministry of Christ. Therefore, lay and seculars are also essential.
16. We must rediscover the sense of our mission, in coordination with the other two Franciscan Orders. It is an essential mission in the Franciscan project of God.

The task is ours now, after having been taught by history, to bring back to its original beauty the Third Order of the Penitents of Saint Francis and to enable it fully recover its ecclesial role, and contribute to render the third millennium truly Christian.



What is Profession?

[Taken from a power point presentation received from National Formation Commission]

What is profession?

- Profession is a gift of the Holy Spirit
- Profession is at the same time ○ A promise of man/woman and ○ commitment by God
- General Constitutions state that Profession is a solemn ecclesial act.
- Ritual states that profession is public and ecclesial

Holy Spirit and Candidate

- The Lord grants the grace of consecrating oneself to the cause of the kingdom.
- We acknowledge this gift with the opening words of profession:
I, N.N. by the grace of God ...

Profession and the Church

- Profession is to take place during the liturgical celebration of the Mass whenever possible.
- If Mass is not possible, Profession should take place within the Liturgy of the Word.
- In liturgy, the Church expresses the deepest conviction of the SFO and life in the SFO.

Celebration is an Action

- The Lord acts.
- The entire Body of Christ acts.
- The local fraternity acts.
- The candidate acts

Person/Ministries Involved in Profession

- Those Being Professed

- These person are to be fully initiated in the Catholic Church *You have been members of the people of God by your Baptism, and strengthened in Confirmation by the new gift Of the Spirit, in order to proclaim Christ by your life and Your words. Do you wish to bind yourself more closely To the Church?* Ritual, p. 22
- Profession is a priestly act.

Minister of the Fraternity

- Ritual and General Constitutions state that the Minister receives the profession.
- The minister becomes a representative of
 - The local fraternity
 - The Order
 - The entire Church.

Priest

- is a witness of the Church and the Franciscan family
- guarantees the awareness and intention of the candidate
- ratifies the profession: he confirms the promises made in the name of the Church

Gift of the Spirit in the Celebration of Profession

- The Spirit transforms
 - Profession is a new Pentecost
 - Priest as servant of God transmits the blessing of God
 - The ministerial priesthood of the priest activates the baptismal priesthood of those gathered to make profession

Relation between Profession and the Eucharist

- Profession is an offering of sacrifice
 - liturgical act
 - priestly act
- The promise of the evangelical life places the candidates on an altar of sacrifice

Profession is commitment of one's life for the life

- Profession is not the act of a moment
- Profession establishes a new state of existence - the state of profession is intrinsically related to the Eucharist

Relation between Baptism and Profession

Article 6 of our Rule states that we

“...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.”

Profession strengthens our bond with the Church

- Grace of Profession unites us more closely to the Church
- Profession recalls the memory of Baptism
- Baptism is brought to fulfillment in profession

According to Article 6

“...we should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.”

In the Church, let them be recognized for who they are, not what they do.
GC 100.3

Profession as Commitment

- The promise of profession denotes a decision and a strong determination to carry it through.
 1. In profession, we make a promise
 2. We enter into covenant with God.

What do we promise?

- Personal Commitment for Life
 1. From Profession on, we have the will to live the Gospel
 2. Profession takes up the entire person
 3. The Lord called me and he does not make a mistake.

- To live the Gospel according to the charism of Francis
 1. in the Church
 2. an evangelical - Franciscan vocation
 3. Gospel is mandatory
- Profession demands a radical life
 1. Radical: back to basics
 2. Francis did not set up norms, but a way of life

Article 4

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of His life with God and people.

Francis conformed his life to that of Christ in suffering

By our promise to live an evangelical life, we take up Christ, the Book of Life:

“Christ, poor and crucified”, victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the “book” in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving and suffering.”
GC #10

Evangelical Counsels

- *Obedience to the will of God for our life* as stated in Article 10
- *A poverty of detachment* as stated in Article 11
- *An openness to love* as stated in Article 12

*Hold back nothing of yourselves for
Yourselves, that He who gives Himself Totally
to you may receive you totally!*
LtOrd 29

Secularity

As lay people, we are in the world as

*“leaven” in the ordinary conditions of
family and social life, thus ordaining
temporal things toward God.*

Mission of secular lay people

- Is to be consecrated in the world for the world
- We are to be a gift to the world in our profession

With a joyful optimism
We must redeem the world
We must become holy in the world

**Sanctification of the World can only happen through sanctification
of persons through the spirit of the Beatitudes.**



Brothers & Sisters of St. Francis Region
Alabama • Georgia • North Carolina • South Carolina • Tennessee

Our Vocation

[Taken from a power point presentation received from National Formation Commission]

Vocation is a gift

- It is not something we deserve.
- It does not depend on our actions.
- Vocation comes with the grace to fulfill the mission God has placed Before us when we respond to the will of God.

Our Particular Vocation

- God calls: we are not the ones who choose.
- We are called to Life.
- We are called to a life in Christ.
- We are called to holiness.
- We are called within a particular state: Secular, religious, lay, cleric.
- We are called to the Franciscan “way” of living.
- We are called with a specific purpose and mission.
- We are to discern this vocation.

God calls: we are not the ones who choose

- Vocation comes from God and must be oriented toward him.
- The primary goal of a vocation is to live in closer union with God.
- The only way the call can be answered is with full and unlimited Openness.

We are called to Life.

- Vocation demands our entire life.
- In calling us, God chooses for us this way as our life.
- Vocation denotes availability.

We are called to a life in Christ

- In living out this call, we are gifted with life in Christ.
- We give witness to this life by our very profession:

“I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

We are called to a particular life, a life of following Christ

We are called within a particular state: secular religious, lay, cleric.

- Who we ARE
 Secular - living in the World
 Religious - living a consecrated life in community
- What we DO
 Lay, non-ordained
 Cleric, ordained

Secularity

- Our vocation as Secular Franciscans is to receive what we already ARE. For us, secularity is a specific way to be a witness to salvation.
- We can speak of a secular state being consecrated to God.

Vatican II Gaudium et Spes speaks of the world

- As being the place of the human race
- Created and preserved by the love of the Creator
- Redeemed and freed to be transformed into what it was meant To be.

Living in the world, we commit ourselves to its sanctification

- Our Rule, Article 2, identifies where we are to strive for perfect Charity: in our own secular state, our own history, and our own lives.
- Our Ritual speaks of our consecration that is to be lived in the World and of our desire to live for the world.

Laity Lumen Gentium 31

- Laity by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in the temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the will of

God. They live in the world, in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven.

- As lay people, we are in the world as “leaven” in the ordinary Conditions of family and social life.
- We cast the light of God in our space in the world thus ordaining Temporal things toward God.

The secular Dimension [being of the world], though belonging to the entire Church, is accomplished by lay people in a specific manner.

We are called to the Franciscan “way” of living

- Each of the spiritual families, raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, is graced with a particular charism.
- Francis sought to become like Christ, most especially in his Relationship with the Father.
- He was able to live God’s humility, the Father’s humility in Giving us his Son.
- In response Francis gave himself totally to God • Francis passes this charism onto us.

Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!

[Lt Ord 29]

Article 4 of our Rule captures this charism

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people ... Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

We are called with a specific purpose and mission

- No one was called for him/herself, but for the good of God’s people.
- The fulfillment of any call is realized in the Holy Spirit and demands an Offering of oneself to others in love.
- Francis’ call was to “rebuild my house which as you see has fallen Into ruin.”

As Secular Franciscans, sons and daughters of St. Francis, we too are called to this mission

- We are not called to relive Francis' life; we are called to discern our Own gifts and how we can use them to "repair God's house".
- What is this house? It is the Church, the Body of Christ. We are to live in the world with a spirit of authentic universal fraternity.

We are to repair all that may be broken by our BEing in the world first; what we DO will come after. There are no specific recipes for us. As he lay dying Francis remarked,

"I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours!"

We are to discern this vocation

- It is possible to be inspired by Francis but not be destined to serve in a Franciscan way of life
- A vocation must be discerned
 - a. One must KNOW Francis
 - b. One must ALLOW oneself to be CONFRONTED BY Francis

Final analysis:

Does what I feel correspond to what I want?



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BSSF Recommended List of Formation Texts and Resources Work in Progress

Or What is God asking of me?

Section F: Initial Formation Texts and Resources

The Holy Scriptures are THE resource for the Initial Formation Texts and Resources list. “The Bible does not speak about God as other books do; rather, in it *God speaks to us about himself* - which is something quite different.” - Introduction to the Navarre Bible of St. Mark

89 BSSF Recommended List of Initial Formation Texts and Resources

“Through the study of books one seeks God, by meditation one finds Him.”

St. Pio of Pietrelcina

Initial Formation Texts:

- The Franciscan Journey - Embracing the Franciscan Vision by Lester Bach, OFM Cap. Smokey Valley Press
- [The FUN Manual](#)
- [Come and See Digests](#)
- [TOTAL-Supplemental-Reading-Franciscan-Journey.pdf \(jdpofs.org\)](#)

Ongoing Formation Texts:

There are numerous sources throughout the list that may be used for Ongoing Formation and numerous books not Listed

What theme would your fraternity like to read/study?

- [From the FUN Manual:](#)

2.6.b. Material Content Ongoing Formation Ongoing formation materials are unlimited. Gospel living is not simply knowledge, but an attitude and a commitment. In essence, ongoing formation is ongoing conversion, and the objective is growing into the image and likeness of God. (FUN Manual- Formation in the SFO)

Here are a few of the limitless resources:

- * The ongoing formation portion of the regularly scheduled fraternity gathering
 - Retreats, days of prayer, workshops, and seminars
 - Church documents, papal encyclicals, apostolic letters
 - Books, tapes, videos that draw us into deeper personal knowledge of Christ, Saint Francis, Franciscan spirituality, and all other aspects of our way of life.
 - The Rule as a document for meditation and integration into one's life
 - Introduction to Franciscan theology and theologians such as Saint Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus
 - Et cetera!
 - Add your own:
- Gospel Living Every Day of our Lives: A Formation Guide to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Teresa Baker, SFO
- St. Francis and the Foolishness of God, Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, OFM, Cynthia Moe-Lobedo, Stuart Taylor
- Through the Veil of Morning: An Inner Journey in the Pathways of Francis & Clare of Assisi, Liam Francis Costello, OFM
- To Live As Francis Lived: A Guide for Secular Franciscans, Leonard Foley, OFM, Jovian Wiegel, OFM, Pattie Normile, SFO
- To Set Themselves Free, A Continuous Guide to the Life and Rule of The Secular Franciscans, Teresa Baker SFO (2005)
- Pick More Daisies, On-going Formation for Secular Franciscans, by Lester Bach OFM Cap (2004). This text looks at our Rule while coordinating it with the General Constitutions and Statutes of the Secular Franciscan Order.
- "Seeking a Gospel Life by Lester Bach, OFM Cap., Smokey Valley Printing

Biographies about St. Francis:

- God's Fool, the Life and Times of Francis, Julien Green, Harper Collins Pub. (271 pages)

- Saint Francis of Assisi, G.K. Chesterton, Image Doubleday (149 pages)
- St. Francis of Assisi, Thomas of Celano, Francis Press, (327 pages)
- Francis, the Journey and the Dream, Murray Bodo, OFM, St. Anthony's Messenger (274 pages)
- St. Francis of Assisi, John Moorman, Francis Press (118 pages)
- The Poverello, Mark Hiegnier, OFM, Franciscan Press (92 pages)
- Francis of Assisi, The Song Goes On, Hugh Noonan, St. Anthony OFM, and Roy Gasnick OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1994 (41 pages)

Books about St. Francis:

- Francis of Assisi, Early Documents - This is pretty much updated and expanded Omnibus in 4 volumes: Regis Armstrong OFM Cap, J.A. Wayne Hellman OFM Conv., William Short OFM
 - The Saint (1999)
 - The Founder (2000)
 - The Prophet (2001)
 - Index
All Of the Above Can be Found on [The Franciscan Tradition](#)
- Wisdom of the Poverello, Eloi Leclerc, Franciscan Herald Press (1961)
- Francis of Assisi, Performing the Gospel, Lawrence Cunningham, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. (2004)
- The Road to Peace in Assisi by Bret Thoman, SFO, 2010 - Email him at bret.thoman@gmail.com
- Finding Francis, Following Christ, Michael H. Crosby OFM Cap., Orbis Books (2007)
- In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare, Roch Niemier, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2006
- Following Francis of Assisi - A Spirituality for Daily Living, Patti Normile, SFO, St. Anthony's

Messenger Press, 1996

- Light in the Dark Ages: The Friendship of Francis and Clare of Assisi, Jon M. Sweeney, Paraclete Press (2007)

Books about St. Clare:

- Clare, a Light in the Garden, Murray Bodo (1992)
- Clare of Assisi, Early Documents, The Lady, Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap., New City Press (2006)
- Clothed with Gladness, the Story of St. Clare, Sister Mary St. Paul, PCC, Our Sunday Visitor (2000)
- The Living Mirror, Reflections on Clare of Assisi, Sister Frances Teresa OSC, Orbis Books (1995)
- Clare of Assisi, A Heart Full of Love, Ilia Delio, OSF, St. Anthony Messenger Press (2007)

Books/Resources for the “Twelve Elements of Franciscan Spirituality”

Incarnation

- Living the Incarnation, Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi, Sister Frances Teresa OSC, Franciscan Press (1993)

Love of the Eucharist

- The Eucharist, Our Sanctification, Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., the Liturgical Press (1993)

Love of Scripture

- Catholic Bible - preferably with commentary

Reliance upon the Holy Spirit

- The Gift of God: The Holy Spirit, Fr. Andrew Apostoli, CFR, Alba House (1994)

Devotion to the Mother of God

- Mary, Mirror of the Church, Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM Cap., the Liturgical Press (1992)
- The Imitation of Mary, Alexander De Rouville, Catholic Book Pub. Co. (1985)
- True Devotion to Mary, St. Louis DeMontfort, TAN books (1941)

Dedication to Prayer

- Franciscan Prayer, Ilia Delio, OSF, St. Anthony Messenger Press, (2004)
- Praying with Francis of Assisi, Joseph Stoutzenberger and John Bohrer, St. Mary's Press (1989)
- The Prayers of Saint Francis, compiled by W. Bader, New City Press
- Ten Evenings with God, Ilia Delio, OSF, Liguori, 2008
- 15 Days of Prayer with Saint Francis of Assisi, Thaddee Matura OFM, New City Press (2009)
a.k.a. A Dwelling Place for the Most High
- Secular Franciscan Companion, compiled and edited by Marion A. Habig, O.F.M., Franciscan Herald Press
- Francis and the San Damiano Cross: Meditations on Spiritual Transformation, Susan Saint Sing, Ph.D., St. Anthony Messenger Press (2006)
- The Saint Francis Prayer Book: A Guide to Deepen Your Spiritual Life, by Jon M. Sweeney, Paraclete Press (2004)
- The Saint Clare Prayer Book: Listening for God's Leading, Jon M. Sweeney, Paraclete Press (2004)

The Communal Life

- Francis and the Foolishness of God, Marie Dennis, Joseph Nangle, OFM, Cynthia Moe-Loebada, Stuart Taylor, Orbis Books (1993)

Poverty and Simplicity

- The Lessons of Saint Francis: How to Bring Simplicity and Spirituality into your Daily Life, John Michael Talbot and Steve Rabey, Penquin Groups USA (1998)

Humility

- The Humility of God, Ilia Delio, OSF, St. Anthony Messenger Press ((2005)

A Joyful Spirit

- St. Francis and the Cross, reflections on suffering, weakness, and joy, Raniero Cantalamessa, OFM, and Carlo Martini, Charis-Servant Publications (1965)

Peace-Making

- The Prayer of Saint Francis, a Message of Peace for the World Today, Leonardo Boff, Orbis Books (2001)
- Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi, Albert Haase, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press (1989)
- The Saint and the Sultan: The Crusades, Islam, and Francis of Assisi's Mission of Peace, Paul Moses, Doubleday Religion (2009)

Solidarity with All Creation

- Care for Creation [a Franciscan spirituality of the earth], Ilia Delio, SFO, Keith Douglass Warner, OFM, Pamela Wood, St. Anthony Messenger Press (2008)

Enrichment - Franciscan Tradition

- The Way of St. Francis, the Challenge of Franciscan Spirituality for Everyone, Murray Bodo, OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press
- Crucified Love, Bonaventure's Mysticism of the Crucified Christ, Ilia Delio, OSF, Franciscan Press (1998)
- Poverty and Joy, the Franciscan Tradition, William Short OFM, Orbis Books (1999)
- Francis and Clare, the Complete Works, Regis Armstrong, OFM, and Ignatius Brady, OFM
- Simply Bonaventure, an Introduction to his Life, Thought, and Writings, Ilia Delio, OSF, New City Press, 2nd print (2003)
- The Journey into God, a forty-day Retreat with Bonaventure, Francis, and Clare, Josef Raischl SFO and Andre Cirino OFM, St. Anthony Messenger Press (2002)
- Contemplating the Trinity, the Path to Abundant Christian Life, Raniero Cantalamessa OFM Cap, The Word Among Us Press (2007)
- Scotus for Dunces, an Introduction to the Subtle Doctor, Mary Beth Ingham CSJ, Franciscan

Institute (2003)

- In the Footsteps of Francis and Clare, Roch Niemier, OFM, St. Anthony Messengers Press, 2006
- Share the Good News Series - On Going Formation for Secular Franciscans - Fr. John Sullivan, OFM [can be downloaded at no cost at www.thefriars.org/SFO/KFFa.html]
- Franciscan Spirituality - Keeping Our Focus on Francis - Fr. John Sullivan, OFM [can be downloaded at no cost at www.thefriars.org/SFO/KFFa.html]
- Coming Home to Your True Self: Leaving the Emptiness of False Attractions, Albert Haase, O.F.M., IVP Books (2008)
- The Sun and Moon Over Assisi: a personal encounter with Francis and Clare, Gerard Thomas Straub, St. Anthony Messenger Press (2000)
- The Holy Longing: The Search for a Christian Spirituality, by Ronald Rolheiser, Doubleday (1999)

Secular Franciscan Resources

- Elements of Formation: A Reflection on the Formation Process by the Presidency of the International Council of the SFO, Smokey Mountain Printing, 785-227-2364
- Guidelines for Initial Formation in the SFO in the U.S., prepared by the National Formation Commission, Smokey Mountain Printing, 785-227-2364
- “TAU-USA”
- “Communio”
- Build with Living Stones, Formation for Franciscan Life and Work
Order from <http://franins.sbu.edu/>
- Called to Follow Christ: A Commentary on the Secular Franciscan Rule by the National Assistants Commentary Commission, Benet Fonck, OFM
- Called to Rebuild the Church: A Spiritual Commentary on the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap
- Called to Live the Dynamic Power of the Gospel: Commentary on the Rule of the SFO, Philip Marquard, OFM
- Called to Proclaim Christ: Short Reflections on the SFO Rule, Benet Fonck, OFM

- Called to Make Present the Charism, Benet Fonck OFM, editor
- Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical World, A Concordance to the SFO Rule, Benet Fonck OFM

Catholic Teaching

- Catechism of the Catholic Church
- United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Papal Encyclicals On-Line

- Papal Documents - Holy See - www.vatican.va

SFO Websites

- <http://www.ciofs.org/en.htm> (International Fraternity of the SFO)
- Secular Franciscan-USA
- www.franciscanaction.org (Franciscan Action Network)
- www.franciscanyouthusa.com (Franciscan Youth of the USA)
- <http://www.franciscan-archive.org/patriarcha/> (about St. Francis)

Movies

Can be purchased from www.IGNATIUS.COM

- Bella
- Clare and Francis
- The Nativity Story
- The Passion of the Christ
- Left to Tell

Must Have's for every Secular Franciscan

- Catholic Bible [With/commentary preferred]
- General Constitutions, Rule, Statues Handbook franres@wcta.net (Franciscan Resources)
- Secular Franciscan Companion, [Franciscan Press, Phone 217-228-5670]

- Ritual of the SFO, franres@wcta.net (Franciscan Resources)
- Liturgy of the Hours or Christian Prayer Book