

Statutes of the National Fraternity of the SFO in the USA – Articles 6.4; 18.7 & 18.9; 19/ 25

Article 6. Duties of Officers of the National Executive Council

4. The National Treasurer, in addition to the duties enumerated in article #52.4 of the General Constitutions, has the following duties:

a. To ensure the deposit of all funds of the National Fraternity which may come into the hands of the National Treasurer into such bank accounts in the name of NAFRA as the National Executive Council shall designate;

b. To provide for the payment of monies as the business of the National Fraternity may require as approved in the annual budget or on the order of the National Minister or the National Executive Council. All payments are to be made by check.

c. To submit an annual budget to the National Executive Council for its review, and to the National Fraternity Council for its review and approval at the annual meeting.

d. To be responsible for the financial books and records of NAFRA. Upon the written request of any member of the National Fraternity Council to the Treasurer, these financial records shall be open for inspection.

e. To provide the National Fraternity Council with financial reports of receipts, expenditures, and balances in NAFRA's treasury throughout the year, and at the beginning of each year, to provide a written statement of receipts, expenditures and balances in NAFRA's treasury for the preceding year.

Article 18. Local Fraternity

7. The Local Fraternity is responsible for contributing to the Regional Fraternity on a fair share basis from its common fund to underwrite the costs of that fraternity [cf. General Constitutions, article #30.3]. A fair share contribution is made based on the number of active and excused brothers and sisters, but not for those who are deemed lapsed.

a. An active fraternity member is one who participates both by attending fraternity meetings and by providing financial support to the community, or whom the fraternity has excused from such obligations.

b. Those brothers and sisters who neither attend meetings, support the community financially, nor have valid reasons due to health, family, work or distance, and who, after personal invitations to return to fraternity, consciously and deliberately reject or ignore the invitation, will be termed "lapsed" and will not be carried on the fraternity membership roll nor be reported as a member to higher fraternity Councils [cf. General Constitutions, article #53.3].

9. It is at the local level that activities have their greatest meaning to members of the SFO. The Local Fraternity Council should expend great care to provide for thought-provoking activities and programs to foster Franciscan life and to deepen Franciscan spirituality among fraternity members.

Article 19. Formation

1. Orientation

a. Orientation is a time for determining a person's interest, eligibility and disposition to enter into the initial formation process [cf. Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States (hereafter Guidelines for Initial Formation), page 25].

b. The period of orientation shall consist of not less than three (3) months.

2. Initial Formation

a. Inquiry – The period of Inquiry, which begins with the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming [cf. Ritual, page 9], shall consist of not less than six (6) months.

b. Candidacy – The period of Candidacy, which begins with the Rite of Admission [cf. Ritual, page 11], shall consist of not less than eighteen (18) months and not more than thirty-six (36) months.

c. All persons in initial formation, in addition to attending their formation sessions, must participate in the meetings of the Local Fraternity as this is an indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life [cf. General Constitutions, article #40.3].

d. To be admitted to the SFO in the United States, a person must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (i.e., having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) in addition to being an actively practicing Catholic.

3. Profession

a. The minimum age for perpetual profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is twenty-one (21) years.

b. The minimum age for temporary profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is eighteen (18) years.

4. Ongoing Formation

Ongoing formation is the responsibility of all professed members consonant with article #44 of the General Constitutions.

5. Form and Methodology

a. The form (i.e., content and process; cf. General Constitutions, #38.2) to be employed in both initial and ongoing formation is that found in the Guidelines for Initial Formation.

b. The methodology employed in formation should be both interactive and experiential in nature [cf. *General Constitutions*, #40.4].

c. Opportunities for fraternities to meet together for the purposes of common ongoing and initial formation shall occur whenever possible at all levels of fraternity [cf. *General Constitutions*, #40.1].

6. Provisions for Remote Initial Formation

In those rare instances in which a person is legitimately impeded from participating in the normal formation process of a Local Fraternity, recourse may be had to the *Guidelines for Remote Initial Formation in the United States* as adopted by the National Executive Council in June 2000.

Article 25. Structure for Property Control for the Regional Fraternity

1. The provisions relating to property control which appear in these *National Statutes* in the section dealing with the responsibilities of the National Fraternity shall apply to the Regional Fraternities insofar as they may be adapted to the needs and circumstances of the Regional Fraternity.

2. Particular note should be taken that expenses of the Regional Executive Council and those individuals invited by this Council to serve the Regional Fraternity in some capacity shall be borne by the Regional Fraternity for attendance at required meetings.

3. The Regional Fraternity is responsible for contributing to the National Fraternity on a fair share basis from its treasury to help provide for the expenses of NAFRA.

4. As required by article #54.2 of the *General Constitutions*, the National Executive Council shall approve statements for use by the Regional Fraternities that establish "precise criteria" for their "statement of purposes" and "internal controls" which must be used in their establishing documents.

Contemplation: Seeing and Loving – Franciscan Prayer – Ilia Delio, OSF – Page 134

Contemplation is the fruit of union in love; it is the vision of the lover who gazes on the beloved. The biographers of Francis tell us that after he encountered the God of compassionate love in the visible figure of the crucified Christ, Francis' "vision" began to change. Prayer that leads to an openness of the Spirit and the indwelling of the Word and Father leads to an experience of penetrating vision by which one sees God in concrete reality. The Spirit, welcomed in the silence of prayer, transforms the vision of our hearts to see the invisible presence of God hidden in the depths of ordinary reality. As Francis "ascended" the mountain of love in union with Christ, he began to see the world around him differently – the leper became his brother and the poor and sick were visible expressions of God's overflowing love. What was initially "bitter for Francis became "sweet" as he contemplated the goodness of God in fragile humanity.

Francis of Assisi – The Founder – pp 150-151

[He persuades the brothers to go joyfully begging for alms]

When Francis began to have brothers, he was so happy about their conversion and that the Lord had given him good company, that he loved and revered them so much that he did not tell them to go for alms, especially because it seemed to him that they would be ashamed to go. Rather, sparing them shame, he himself would go alone for alms every day. His body was worn out by this, especially since in the world he had been a refined man and of a weak constitution; and he had become weaker from the day when he left the world because of the excessive fasting and suffering he endured.

He considered that he could not bear so much labor, and that they were called to this, even though they would be ashamed, and did not fully understand; but neither had they been discerning enough to tell him: "We want to go for alms." So he talked to them, "My dearest brothers and sons, don't be ashamed to go for alms, because *the Lord for our sake made Himself poor in this world*. Therefore, because of His example, we have chosen the way of the most genuine poverty and that of His most holy Mother. This is our inheritance, which the Lord Jesus Christ acquired and bequeathed to us and to all who want to live in holy poverty according to His example." And he told them: "I tell you the truth: many of the noblest and wisest of this world will come to this congregation and they will consider it a great honor to go for alms. Therefore, go for alms confidently with joyful hearts with the blessing of the Lord God. And you ought to go begging more willingly and with more joyful hearts than someone who is offering a hundred silver pieces in exchange for a single penny, since you are offering the love of God to those from whom you seek alms. Say to them: 'Give alms to us for the love of the Lord God: compared to this, heaven and earth are nothing!'"

They were still few in number so that he could not send them out two by two, so he sent each one separately through the towns and villages. When they returned, each one showed blessed Francis the alms he had collected, one saying to the other, "I collected more alms than you!"

This gave blessed Francis reason to rejoice, seeing them so happy and cheerful. From then on each of them more willingly asked permission to go for alms.

Luke 8:4-15

And when a great crowd came together and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable: “A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell along the path, and was trodden under foot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock; and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns grew with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew, and yielded a hundredfold.” As he said this, he called out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, “To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God; but for others they are in parables, so that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy; but these have no root, they believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. And as for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bring forth fruit with patience.