

Secular Franciscan Order

Lady Poverty Region



Formation Manual

April 9, 2009

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Preface

The Formation Director position in each fraternity is the most demanding and time consuming position on the council. Even in the smallest fraternity the Formation Director should have one or two additional professed members assisting them with the duties of that position. The major duties of a formation director, i.e., vocation development, initial formation and on-going formation, can easily occupy the time and talents of three or more people if they are to be carried out effectively. We prayerfully hope that this material will help us raise the consistency and quality of formation in our region.

For all Secular Franciscans, formation is a life-long-process. Internationally and nationally the Secular Franciscan Order has invested many years in conjunction with the efforts of numerous authors to produce the formation material necessary to guide and develop our visitors into professed brothers and sisters. The amount of material produced would take most of us a lifetime to read, understand and apply it to our local fraternity. For practical purposes we select what appears to be appropriate for our fraternity and use it for the initial and in some cases the on-going formation programs.

The purpose of this manual is to provide the local fraternity with a starting point when it is necessary to orient a new minister, formation director, formation team member, or council member with the framework of the formation process. It describes how the formation process links together through the Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy phases, who should be involved at each step, what documentation is required and who approves the next phase. The material in the manual is not meant to be all inclusive; you may choose to expand the material or process to best suit your local fraternity. However, in all fraternities the process, procedures, documentation and approval points outlined in the manual should be considered the absolute minimum for developing a first time visitor into a professed Secular Franciscan.

It is highly recommended that the members of a fraternity's council be actively involved in the initial and ongoing formation processes in order to increase the effectiveness of these processes. If you are a new minister, formation director, formation team member, or fraternity council member this manual is intended to be your starting point to understand the role and importance of formation in the Secular Franciscan Order. If you have served in those capacities before, it provides you with a guideline to evaluate how you are doing and where you may want to modify or add to your program.

All material contained in this manual is available from the Lady Poverty Region website at: <http://www.ladypovertyregion.org/index.cfm/NewsItem?ID=213624&From=Home> in PDF format. We recommend that all members of your fraternity council and the formation team download these files so as to use this material to best support your fraternity's formation processes.

This manual is the property of your local fraternity and should be passed on to future formation directors, along with the formation director's official records.

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Acknowledgements

The material in this manual is taken from a variety of sources, including the former *Lady Poverty Formation Resource Kit*, the NAFRA Formation Commission website [<http://www.nafra-sfo.org/formation.html>], materials adapted with permission from the *Five Franciscan Martyrs Region Formation Director Manual*, and other sources. Lady Poverty Region gratefully acknowledges these contributions.

Lady Poverty Region also gratefully acknowledges the contributions of those who directly contributed to the development of this manual. The members of the Lady Poverty Region Formation Team (2008-2010) are as follows:

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Section I

General Information

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The Formation Director Job Description

The Formation Director or Master of Formation, who may be assisted by a Formation Team (elected or appointed), coordinates the fraternity's formative activities as outlined by Articles 40-45 of the 2001 SFO General Constitutions, striving to provide an experience of life in fraternity, a growing knowledge of the SFO, and a guarantee for full maturation of the vocation. Those tasks consist of three primary formation activities:

- Initial Formation
- On-Going Formation
- Promotion of Vocations

Initial Formation: Should consist of structured tasks and documentation that provide the steps of the initial formation process:

- frequent meetings for study and prayer, with concrete experiences of both fraternal service and of individual or group apostolate;
- meetings held in common with candidates and inquirers from other fraternities whenever possible or practical;
- guidance to study and meditate on sacred scripture, the sacraments, the liturgical prayer of the Church, the teachings of the Church, the SFO Rule and Constitutions, and the person and writings of St. Francis and Franciscan spirituality;
- training in a love for the Church and acceptance of her teaching so that their Secular Franciscan commitment may be lived in the world in an evangelical way; and,
- participation in the meetings of the local fraternity, so that the inquirers and candidates may enter more vitally into community prayer and fraternity life.

The formation director/team instructs and animates the brothers and sisters in their period of formation. Prior to admission and profession, the formation director informs the fraternity council concerning the suitability of the inquirer or candidate, based on a continuous process of joint discernment by the formation director, the inquirer or candidate, and the sponsor or other fraternity members.

It is desirable that documentation to begin the formation process be completed by each Inquirer so that the council may know more about those seeking instruction within the fraternity. Three letters of recommendation are necessary for the fraternity council to make their determination of a candidate's suitability for admission into the SFO:

- from a priest or religious who knows the prospective Candidate's standing within the Church;

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- from another fraternity member or a lay person who knows the Candidate's character and intentions; and,
- from the Candidate stating his/her intention and desire for a deeper commitment within the Secular Franciscan Order.

Before temporary and/or permanent profession and upon the recommendation of the formation director, it is desirable that a Candidate meet with the entire Council, so that their mutual hopes and expectations may be shared openly and proper discernment may be made about the Candidate's commitment to live the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order. A special interview with the fraternity Spiritual Assistant (or Regional Spiritual Assistant, if necessary) is also highly desirable.

On-Going Formation: "A continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation" (Article 8) is necessary for all Professed Secular Franciscans, as "they seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the SFO" (Article 8).

- The formation team, along with the entire Fraternity Council, has the duty to help the fraternity members with programs of continuing [or on-going] formation which help the brothers and sisters develop their vocation in fraternity and to follow the life of the Church by means of courses, meetings, and experiences (cf. Article 44).
- On-going formation opportunities held apart from the regular, monthly fraternity meeting are most advantageous for fostering growth in fraternity life and for renewing individual commitment to the Gospel Way of Life.

Promotion of Vocations: This task is the responsibility of all professed members of the fraternity; the effort however should be coordinated by the Formation director, desirably with the help of a Vocation Director. The activities include:

- Promotion of the SFO life in Catholic churches and religious groups of your community through flyers, articles and speaking if the opportunity presents itself.
- The facilitation of all activities the visitor should be involved in during the Orientation Phase.
- An assessment of all visitors during the Orientation Period of the signs of a vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order.

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Franciscan Formation

Franciscan formation is based on a personal encounter with the Lord, and begins with the call of God and the individual's decision to walk with Saint Francis in the footsteps of the poor and crucified Christ as His disciple under the action of the Holy Spirit.

Franciscan formation is a continuous process of growth and conversion involving the whole of a person's life, called to develop his or her own particular human, Christian and Franciscan dimensions, radically living the Holy Gospel, in the spirit of prayer and devotion, in fraternity and minority.

The following of Jesus Christ in the manner of St Francis leads us to commit ourselves to the Church and with her to place ourselves at the service of the men and women of our time, as messengers of reconciliation and peace.

1. AFTER THE EXAMPLE OF ST. FRANCIS

The following of Christ was shaped for St. Francis by his encounters with the Crucified of San Damiano and with the leper, and by his listening to the Gospel. These experiences made St Francis grow in his passionate love of the poor and crucified Christ, until his complete conformity with Him on La Verna.

The strong experience of God as Father and the Highest Good characterized the life of St Francis. It moved him to an attitude towards the Creator of gratitude and praise for His wonders and made him a brother to all people and to all creatures.

The gift given to St Francis was that of beginning to do penance. This then involved a process of continuing conversion which changed to sweetness those things which before had seemed bitter. St Francis was in due course led to forsake the mentality and attitudes of this world, to despoil himself of his possessions and of himself in order to pass from a life centered on himself to a gradual conformity with Christ (cf. Test 1.3-4).

The path followed by St Francis is a model for the life and formation of us Franciscans today, for we too are called to walk along the same road until we achieve the full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13), faithful to our mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all (cf. Rb 12).

2. PRINCIPLES OF FRANCISCAN FORMATION

(1) General Principles

Franciscans, under the grace of the Holy Spirit, are the chief protagonists of their own formation, responsible for accepting and making their own all the values of Franciscan life, capable of making their own decisions and exercising personal initiative.

Franciscan formation is a dynamic process of growth in which we open our heart to the Gospel in our daily life and commit ourselves fully to being continually converted so as to follow Jesus Christ ever more faithfully in the spirit of St Francis.

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The process of formation respects our unique individuality and the mystery which we bear in ourselves through our particular gifts, encouraging us to grow through knowing ourselves and discovering the will of God. Franciscan formation takes place in our Fraternity and in the real world. It is here that we experience the power of grace, are renewed in mind and heart, and develop our evangelizing vocation.

Such Franciscan formation is ever alert to our human, Christian, and Franciscan growth, in order that we may follow Jesus Christ wholeheartedly, after the manner of Francis.

(2) Specific Principles

- Franciscan formation is holistic, that is to say it takes into account our whole person, in order that we may develop harmoniously our physical, mental, moral, and intellectual gifts, and may integrate ourselves positively in social and community life.
- Franciscan formation is a journey during which the fundamental aspects of our consecrated life are cultivated. Thus all formation activities have as their goal growth in the spirit of prayer and devotion, of community, minority, service and mission.
- Franciscan formation is experiential, that is to say it is based on the particular life and gifts of each person, and encourages the concrete experience of the particular Franciscan style and values in the daily life of the Fraternity and of the individual.
- Franciscan formation is practical, inasmuch as it aims at transforming into action whatever is learned (cf. Adm. 7), especially by means of a constant habit of poverty and work, based on the example of St Francis (cf. Test 24).
- Franciscan formation is acculturated within the conditions of the life, the environment and the time in which it is carried out, while remaining faithful to the Gospel and to the traditions of the Order.
- Franciscan formation is open to new forms of life and service, since it is continually attentive to the present appeals of the world and the Church.
- Franciscan formation is organized in stages which involve the person from the beginning of the vocation process and on throughout life.
- Franciscan formation is organic, gradual and consistent in its various stages, inasmuch as it promotes the development of each person in a harmonious and progressive way, while fully respecting each individual.
- Franciscan formation dedicates adequate time to study, allowing for the particular gifts of each person and without forgetting that learning is not limited to the intellectual dimension of the person, to enable the person to reach an ever fuller knowledge of God and the better to serve everyone.
- Franciscan formation promotes an authentic sense of discipline directed to an honest self-knowledge and self-control, to fraternal life and to service.

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A New Glance at the Formation Process

Prepared by Teresa V. Baker, SFO

The Three Components

There are three components of formation – *informational, formational and transformational*, that are interwoven with the four stages of formation. There are different agents of formation who share the primary responsibility of each of these components. A layout will make this more understandable. Formation is the work of the entire fraternity, not just the formation director!!

The ***Informational Component*** supplies basic information so that the person coming to us in formation is able to make an informed decision concerning his/her vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order. It answers the question: What do I need to know?

Persons primarily responsible for this component of formation are the formation director and the formation team. Necessary for this component are the numerous and varied formational materials that are available to us, biographies of Francis and Clare and Secular Franciscan saints, the writings of Francis and Clare, and the primary sources.

In Orientation, these questions might be delved into:

- What is the Order?
- Who is Francis in your life? How does he fit?
 - ✓ Read three books on Francis; where does his life intercept with yours? If you have nothing in common with Francis, he might not be the best guide for your journey
- Brief intro to the Rule and your life:
 - ✓ Which three articles will be easy for you to assimilate? Which three will be hard?

In Inquiry, these topics will be discussed:

- the call of the Holy Spirit in our life; how are we to be guided?
- the lives and writings of Francis and Clare
- the history of our Order and how it fits into the history of the Franciscan Family
- the history of our Rule
- the Gospel as our way of life
 - ✓ including ways of making it pertinent to our life, ex. Lectio Divina
 - ✓ Clare's suggestion to Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Desire to Imitate
- Community as our basis
- Church as our anchor

In Candidacy, we flesh out all these points and focus on:

- aspects of our Secular Franciscan life as found in Chapters Two and Three of our Rule
- focus on the lives and writings of Secular Franciscan saints

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In Ongoing Formation, we continue to update and deepen our understanding of all aspects of our Secular Franciscan life.

The **Formational Component** immerses the prospective member into the living community that is the fraternity. It answers the question: How do I live this life in community?

Article 22 of our Rule reminds us that:

the local fraternity . . . is the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan family and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.

In Article 23 we are reminded that:

the entire community is engaged in this process of growth (formation) by its manner of living.

Persons primarily responsible for this component of formation are the fraternity members and the fraternity council, and the sponsor during Candidacy. Necessary for this component are the numerous and varied aspects that make up a healthy fraternal life: its sharing, its apostolates, its socializing, its praying, its learning, its business. All that enables a fraternity to BE and DO.

Important guidelines to keep in mind:

- What does the fraternity have to offer me?
- What do I have to offer the fraternity

In Orientation, the local fraternity is the basic unit of the Order, not the individual member:

- we stress that family is the basis of Franciscan life
- Francis in his Testament:
And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel (14).
- Clare in her Testament:
After the most high heavenly Father saw fit in his mercy and grace to enliven my heart, that I should do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed Francis, a short while after his conversion, I, together with a few sisters whom the Lord had given me after my conversion, willingly promised him obedience. . . (24, 25)
- Our Rule:
The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities on various levels (Article 20)

In Inquiry, we focus on how the persons coming to fraternity are formed by its character and manner of being. These opportunities are to be taken advantage of:

- monthly fraternal gatherings
- social events which include all members of the families
- times of prayer
- opportunities to develop the apostolates

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In Candidacy, we continue the various local fraternity happenings and apostolates:

- experience formation and other gatherings with nearby local fraternities
- join in the activities of the regional fraternity
- meet members of other branches of the Franciscan Family

In Ongoing Formation, the fraternity is formed by the various interests and concerns of the individual members:

- allow individual members to share their manners of living the Franciscan lifestyle
- continue to share in the apostolates of others
- continue and expand the connections made during Candidacy

The **Transformational Component** supplies the bedrock of our vocation. Here we examine our relationship with God and how this becomes the alpha and omega of our Franciscan life. It answers the question: How does my relationship with God impact my life and my relationship with others?

Persons primarily responsible for this component of formation are the Holy Spirit, the person in formation, the Spiritual Assistant, and the sponsor for Candidates. Necessary for this component are the daily prayer life and Scripture reading that is prescribed in our Rule; spiritual writings of various Franciscan saints.

In Orientation, areas that should be explored:

- Identify how you were called?
- How is the Holy Spirit moving in your life?
- How might this life as a Franciscan help you to follow Jesus more closely?
- An introduction to a correct reading of Scripture is encouraged

In Inquiry, focus centers on the Franciscan aspect of our spirituality:

- Exactly, what is Franciscan Spirituality?
- How does it differ from other spiritualities in the Church?
- How does the Franciscan fraternity differ from other groups in the parish?
- How does following Francis and Clare help you draw closer to Jesus?
- Why are they good guides for you?
- Meditate on some of the spiritual writings of Francis, Clare and Bonaventure
- *Lectio Divina* as a prayer form should be explored
- Clare's suggestion to Gaze, Consider, Contemplate, Desire to Imitate
- Day of Recollection should be experienced

In Candidacy, focus centers on the secular nature of our spirituality:

- How is your relationship with Jesus lived out in your secular life?
- How does your vocation reach into your marriage, home, neighborhood, work?
- How is your spirituality different from that of the priests and religious sisters and brothers you know?
- How does Gospel living influence your daily life?
- How do the words of the Gospel act out in your daily life?
- Examine the spiritual writings and lives of various Secular Franciscan saints. What example do they give?
- Overnight or Weekend Retreat, preferably on a Franciscan topic, is encouraged

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In Ongoing formation, while continuing to explore our spirituality, we inspect our prayer life:

- Is it the same today as it was five years ago?
- How has it changed?
- investigate these prayer forms:
 - ✓ Bonaventure's *The Soul's Journey into God*
 - ✓ *Office of the Passion*
 - ✓ Solitude experiences
 - ✓ Prayers of St. Francis
- How does entering into Franciscan prayer forms deepen your relationship with God?
- Continue to examine the spiritual writings and lives of various Secular Franciscan saints. Try to emulate their example.
- Retreats of varying lengths and formats are suggested.

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The Sponsor as an Agent of Formation

By Teresa V. Baker, SFO, 2005

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 a newer member of the brotherhood with an older member. In time, the pairs would 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 definitely enter into the conversation. I'm sure they would have asked each other questions they had concerning truths Francis had shared with them. As they were preaching, they probably would have shared what different Scripture passages meant. 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 share 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 greater bonds of unity within the community? Would it have caused stronger bonds of support between the brothers? I believe 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.

Do we have this 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 Candidate. 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 would share prayer, Scripture, how they came to this vocation, the teachings of this way of life, a sharing in mission, and 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. They would have times of leisure to share together, times of worship, times of being present to the creation that surrounds them, times of opening up to God within and God they discovered outside of themselves, times of service to others. All in all, they would share how this call to live the Gospel life in the example of St. Francis is exploding in their very being.

What are the qualifications necessary to be a Sponsor?

- A love of your 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 Sts. Francis and Clare
- A listening heart
- A prayerful spirit

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- A sense of nurture for another's vocation
- A lived experience of Scripture
- A call to service
- An appreciation of creation

How does this process begin? This will vary from fraternity to fraternity. In some fraternities, the person who introduced the Candidate to the Secular Franciscan way of life might be the Sponsor. In another instance, the Candidates may choose a professed member to walk with them. In still another case, the Council would match up professed members with the Candidates to be. 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 Candidate 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 was searching for a way to live a Gospel life and . . ."

Whatever your introduction to St. Francis and the Order, share it, and then ask your partner to share in turn.

What other avenues are there in this sponsor relationship? Together you might try reading a biography of Francis or a book on Franciscan values and share your gleanings. You might watch a movie or see a play about Francis together and share 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 from the formation session. Attend the sessions when you are able. Join in a service project together. 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 Candidate are the primary agents of Formation. The rest of us are present to facilitate this awesome interaction.

Companions on the Journey – a tradition that goes back to the beginnings of the Order of Friars Minor, 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. Be adventurous. Take the first step. Encounter another on the Journey. Enjoy the benefits. Reap the rewards. Accept the role of Sponsor.

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METHODOLOGY OR TEACHING METHODS FOR FORMATION
From *Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ*

The **techniques of adult education** apply to the formation program; namely:

- ***Eclectic (many and varied) resources*** are more important than just one single text.
- ***Concrete solutions and answers*** are more important than theoretical ideas.
- ***Felt needs and lived experiences*** are more important than projected situations.
- ***Applied (experiential) learning*** is just as important and perhaps even more so as scholastic or intellectual input or instruction. (Maybe 70% of the formation process is EXPERIENCE while only 30% is instruction!)
- The director of formation is more a ***facilitator of growth and development*** rather than just a conveyor of information; He or she is not to be considered a "master" or a "doctor" or an "expert", but rather a big brother or sister who accompanies the candidates along their discovery of the Franciscan evangelical life; who replicates by word and action this striving for holiness in a Secular Franciscan way, who tells one's own "story" of embracing and maintaining permanent commitment to gospel living.

AMBIANCE FOR FORMATION

Every formation process should happen within a particular situation or atmosphere in which can be best maintained and accomplished the proper goals, objectives, content and methodology.

Here are some of the components of this ambiance:

Psychological Factors:

- a) an atmosphere where the formative process is neither competitive nor selective, and free from any kind of threat to the participant's self-esteem;
- b) an atmosphere of acceptance and understanding where those being formed are given a sense of self-worth and are affirmed by the formation director and the others in the formation program;
- c) an atmosphere where there exists a two-way experience of faith and trust: director of formation toward those in formation, and vice versa;
- d) an atmosphere where a threat to new knowledge is removed and in its place is inculcated a freedom on the part of those in formation to enter into the material presented and share it and to internalize it and incorporate it into their personal value system;
- e) an atmosphere where new ways of acting and new discoveries are encouraged and affirmed;
- f) an atmosphere where the model is active participation and dialogue on the part of those in formation.

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Physical Factors:

- a) a small, comfortable room, conducive to sharing in personal tones (a "living room" setting rather than a classroom setting);
- b) an arrangement of furniture, lighting, decorations, etc., that lends itself toward feeling at ease, speaking openly, responding freely, e.g., a circle of chairs rather than lecture seating;
- c) a point of focus in the middle of the group - like a lit candle or an icon or a statue -- to center the group's focus on the presence of Jesus in the gathering (*see Mt 18:20*).
- d) a manageable sized group of people, so that the "lived experience of togetherness" in fraternity can operate as a reality;
- e) a time-frame (***ideally at least two hours of formation time each month, over and above the fraternity meeting***) that allows the most effective use of the opportunity for instructional and experiential learning; perhaps this gathering could most effectively happen at a time apart from the regular meeting of the fraternity.

Always keep in mind that ambiance, like other factors, in a formation program, is an ideal to be striven for constantly. Though all the factors above might not be able to be accomplished immediately or at the same time, ***it is the responsibility of the formation director to begin to incorporate as many factors as possible and to continue to improve the ambiance whenever feasible.***

Adult Learners

Characteristics

Below is a comparison of the learning characteristics of adult learners and youth learners. Of course, these are generalizations with exceptions occurring in each group of learners, but you may want to keep these differences in mind as you consider the learner population you expect in your program. The design of your course would be influenced by your expected student population.

Adult Learners	Youth Learners
Problem-centered; seek educational solutions to where they are compared to where they want to be in life	Subject-oriented; seek to successfully complete each course, regardless of how course relates to their own goals
Results-oriented; have specific results in mind for education - will drop out if education does not lead to those results because their participation is usually voluntary	Future-oriented; youth education is often a mandatory or an expected activity in a youth's life and designed for the youth's future
Self-directed; typically not dependent on others for direction	Often depend on adults for direction
Often skeptical about new information; prefer to try it out before accepting it	Likely to accept new information without trying it out or seriously questioning it
Seek education that relates or applies directly to their perceived needs, that is timely and appropriate for their current lives	Seek education that prepares them for an often unclear future; accept postponed application of what is being learned
Accept responsibility for their own learning if learning is perceived as timely and appropriate	Depend on others to design their learning; reluctant to accept responsibility for their own learning

In summary, adult learners usually approach learning differently than younger learners:

- they are more self-guided in their learning
- they bring more, and expect to bring more, to a learning situation because of their wider experience - and can take more away
- they require learning "to make sense" - they will not perform a learning activity just because the instructor said to do it

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Teaching Strategies for Adult Learners

This means that you may find certain teaching strategies more effective than others with your adult learners.

Adult Learner Characteristics	Teaching Strategies
Adults have years of experience and a wealth of knowledge	Use your adult students as resources for yourself and for other students; use open-ended questions to draw out students' knowledge and experiences; provide many opportunities for dialogue among students
Adults have established values, beliefs, and opinions	Take time to clarify student expectations of the course; permit debate and the challenge of ideas; be careful to protect minority opinions within the class
Adults expect to be treated as adults	Treat questions and comments with respect; acknowledge contributions students make to the class; do not expect students to necessarily agree with your plan for the course
Adults need to feel self-directed	Engage students in designing the learning process; expect students to want more than one medium for learning and to want control over the learning pace and start/stop times
Adults often have a problem centered approach to learning	Show immediately how new knowledge or skills can be applied to current problems or situations; use participatory techniques such as case studies and problem-solving groups
Adults tend to be less interested in survey types of courses and more interested in straightforward how-to	Focus on theories and concepts within the context of their applications to relevant problems; orient the course content toward direct applications rather than toward theory
Adults have increased variation in learning styles (individual differences among people increase with age)	Use a variety of teaching materials and methods to take into account differences in style, time, types, and pace of learning

We hope you see that instruction designed for adults tends to be more effective if it is learner-centered than if it is instructor-centered. The instructor must maintain a careful balance between the presentation of new material and its applications, discussion and participation among students, and the quarter's calendar.

Actually the instructor must wrestle with the paradox of establishing control by risking giving it up! By giving up tendencies to feel good about expertly delivering information to the students and to feel threatened by student challenges to the course plan, the instructor gains the kind of facilitative control that is most effective for adult learners. The following chart gives some more explanation.

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Teaching Styles

No one model of instruction will be the best for all situations. Two contrasting models are shown below; one or both or a combination could be used in your program:

Instructor-centered	Learner-centered
The learning objective is usually the transfer of knowledge, information, or skills from the instructor to the students. The instructor more or less controls the material to be learned and the pace of learning while presenting the course content to the students. The purpose of learning is to acquire and memorize new knowledge or learn new skills.	The underlying philosophy is that students learn best not only by receiving knowledge but also by interpreting it, learning through discovery while also setting the pace of their own learning. Instructors coach and mentor students to facilitate their learning, designing experiences through which students acquire new knowledge and develop new skills.

In general, student controlled learning (learner-centered) works best when the learners are relatively mature and possess significant related knowledge or where there is no particular sequencing of the material to be learned. Instructor control of the presentation of course materials (instructor-centered) is more appropriate when learners are less mature and lack necessary prior knowledge. Learners who are immature or lack necessary prior knowledge frequently make poor instructional choices if left on their own (e.g., they are unlikely to estimate correctly whether practice is needed, when sufficient mastery has been attained, etc.)

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Thinking Styles

Here is a brief comparison of some different thinking styles of learners. Again, these are generalizations - some people use more than one style, but generally each person has a preferred style. Your program will be most successful if you vary your style to meet the variety of thinking styles among your students.

Thinking Styles	Characteristics
Reflective Thinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• view new information subjectively• relate new information to past experiences• often ask "why?"• examine their feelings about what they are learning
Creative Thinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• like to play with new information• always ask "why?"• make excellent troubleshooters• create their own solutions and shortcuts
Practical Thinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• want factual information without any "nice-to-know" additions• seek the simplest, most efficient way to do their work• not satisfied until they know how to apply their new skills to their job or other interest
Conceptual Thinkers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• accept new information only after seeing the big picture• want to know how things work, not just the final outcome• learn the concepts that are presented but also want to know the related concepts that may not have been included

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Learning Styles

Here are some of the main learning styles. Most people are predominantly one type of learner, but usually they can adapt to another style. Learners do tend to look for their preferred style in each learning situation because they associate that style with learning success. A program that provides learning experiences for a variety of learning styles will increase the likelihood of learner success in the course.

Learning Styles	Characteristics	Teaching Strategies
Visual Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process new information best when it is visually illustrated or demonstrated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • graphics, illustrations • images • demonstrations
Auditory Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process new information best when it is spoken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lectures • discussions
Kinesthetic Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process new information best when it can be touched or manipulated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written assignments, taking notes • examination of objects • participation in activities
Environmental Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • process new information best when it is presented in surroundings that match learner preferences (room temperature, lighting, seating, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners can control their own learning environment to a large extent

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Section II

Initial Formation

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**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS
Part I: The Orientation Phase**

When we look at the Secular Franciscan formation process, it is important to see it as a continuum, that is, each stage flowing into the next. Aspects that are essential in the first phase, Orientation, will still be essential in the second, Inquiry, the third, Candidacy, and into the Ongoing Formation of professed members.

During Orientation, it is essential that formation resources allow for dialogue and sharing since this is the ideal time to discern a prospective member's call to a Secular Franciscan vocation. If discernment is addressed early, it can save time and avoid heartache for both the individual and the Fraternity.

The materials used in Orientation should allow for comprehensive, yet nonintrusive, personal disclosure so as to discover the person's reasons for wanting to become a Secular Franciscan. We need to discern the extent to which their motivation is compatible with what we know the Order to be. In this way, potential "mismatching" can be handled early, avoiding much anguish for all concerned.

The formation resources used should encourage ample dialogue and sharing since this type of interaction is invaluable in assessing whether aspirants' life circumstances will allow them to commit to the Secular Franciscan lifestyle. Orientation is a favorable time to observe the whole person, physically, spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and interpersonally.

While we're "getting to know them," we expect them to "get to know us," our roots and our charism. Therefore, some form of introduction to the lives of Saints Francis and Clare are appropriate as early as possible and throughout the entire formation process.

Especially useful during Orientation are resources that allow the Fraternity and the formators to gather knowledge about the individual's understanding of the Catholic faith. Remedial work takes time. If their knowledge is inadequate, perhaps involvement in the local church's adult religious education program or RCIA process would be appropriate BEFORE continuing with Secular Franciscan Initial Formation. Please make sure that these persons are fully initiated members of the Catholic faith.

- The Orientation phase of formation is critical. This is a time to watch for specific clues that the person before you is or is not suited for SFO life.
- It is a time for discerning whether or not the prospective member has the basic dispositions that are essential for entering into mature committed relationships such as those which membership in the SFO requires.
- The *Interview Guide for Prospective Members of the Secular Franciscan Order* is especially useful during this phase.
- **Time frame: at least** three to four months
- **Suggested content for the Orientation phase (an OVERVIEW of):**
 - an understanding of discernment and vocation (see *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him* by Fonck, page 5)
 - brief review of Catholic doctrine and Christian morals
 - an explanation of Franciscan prayer life and apostolic activity

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- phases of Secular Franciscan formation and expectations
- introduction to the life of Saint Francis (perhaps in novel form, such as *Francis: The Saint of Assisi* by Mueller; or *Francis: The Journey and the Dream* by Bodo)
- introduction to the life of Saint Clare (perhaps in novel form, such as *Clare: A Light in the Garden* by Bodo)
- branches of the Franciscan family
- 1978 Rule and brief history of the Secular Franciscan Order
- an understanding of some of our Franciscan symbols
- a Franciscan prayer experience

Rite: Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 9-10)

Documents:

- a. Interview Guide for Prospective Members of the SFO (Form provided in this section)
- b. Letters of Recommendation (Form provided in this section)
- c. Record of Regular and Formation Meeting Attendance-From Visitor to Profession (Form provided in this section)
- d. The Franciscan Path of Profession (Form provided in this section)

Bibliography:

- Bodo OFM, Murray. (1992, revised & expanded). *Clare: A Light in the Garden*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press.
- Bodo OFM, Murray. (1988). *Francis: The Journey and the Dream*. Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press.
- Fonck OFM, Benet A. (1996). *To Cling with All Her Heart to Him*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press.
- Mueller, Joan. (2000). *Francis: The Saint of Assisi*. Allen, TX: Thomas More.

Published by the National Formation Commission as Part 1 of a four-part statement on the process of Secular Franciscan formation in the United States, March 2001, revised 2005.

FIRST-TIME VISITOR INTERVIEW:

Prior to the “Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming,” it is very important that **all first time visitors** have a discussion with a professed member of the fraternity (preferably the formation director) to complete the information requested in the *Interview Guide* given on the next several pages. **Even if the visitor is brought to the meeting by a member of the fraternity who vouches for them, this interview is necessary.**

This can be done at the end of the first meeting or after the visitor has returned for the second meeting. **Explain that this information is necessary to ensure the visitor has the necessary background and experience and no impediments exist that would prevent them from becoming a professed member of the SFO.**

It is important to use this opportunity to become acquainted with the visitor and not just ask for answers to the information required on the *Interview Guide for Prospective Members of the SFO* Form. The questions listed are meant to give you some assistance in carrying out a productive discussion. It is suggested that the Form NOT be completed during the discussion, but rather make notes and fill the form out later. **Before you start the interview make certain the person has a definite interest in the SFO.**

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**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS
OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

(All information is to be held in strict confidence.)

**This information is to be obtained through dialogue
and is NOT to be “filled out” by the interested person!**

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone (H) _____ Phone (W) _____

Fax _____ E-mail Address _____

Date of Birth _____ Place _____

Occupation _____

Name of Your Parish _____

Address _____

FAMILY INFORMATION

Spouse's Name _____

Names and ages of children _____

RELIGIOUS FORMATION

What is the extent of your formal Religious Education?

Have you continued educating yourself in the faith since you left school?

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In what ways? (e.g., Bible classes, days of recollection, adult religious education programs)

How many, how often, how recently?

SACRAMENTAL INFORMATION

Please supply copies of certificates for your reception of these sacraments:

Baptism _____

Confirmation _____

Eucharist _____

Matrimony _____

Holy Orders (if diocesan priest or deacon) _____

If you are divorced and remarried, please supply a copy of your Decree of Nullity

MISCELLANEOUS

Are you now a member or have you ever been a member of a Religious Order?

To what groups or organizations do you belong?

How are you active in your parish community?

How are you active in your local community?

How do you occupy your leisure time (hobbies, talents)?

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

How did you first hear of the Secular Franciscan Order?

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What draws your interest to St. Francis?

What drew you to this fraternity?

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

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

What do you expect from the Secular Franciscan Order?

What are you willing to bring to the Secular Franciscan Order?

REFERENCES

Please supply the names and addresses of your pastor or spiritual director and another person to serve as character references.

Comments:

When you have finished the interview, think about the responses and look for signs of a call. Compare what you have heard with the list of signs described in **Signs That a Person MAY Have a Call to the S.F.O.** Make sure to follow up the interview by requesting letters of recommendation from the person's references.

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LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

It is essential that in addition to the Initial Application to the Secular Franciscan Order, the candidate should submit names for letters of recommendation. It is suggested that each candidate supply two such letters, one from a priest or religious and another from a lay person (preferably a Secular Franciscan). Here is a sample letter.

Secular Franciscan Order

_____ Fraternity

Address

Date

Dear _____

(Name)_____ has applied for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order. Secular Franciscans are a community of men and women in the world who seek to pattern their lives after Christ in the spirit of St. Francis.

We would appreciate receiving a letter of recommendation from you regarding (name)_____. Please be assured that all information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely in St. Francis,

Formation Coordinator

Signs that a person MAY have a call to the S.F.O.

1. A person who is a good practicing Catholic.
2. A person who has a desire to follow Jesus. Jesus and his Gospel are at the heart of the Franciscan way of life.
3. A person who has a personal faith relationship with Jesus, not simply intellectual knowledge about him. Franciscans follow Francis' example in loving God, our sister earth and all people.
4. A person who is hope-filled and is willing to deal with life's issues. Pessimists, nay-sayers, and persons who want to hide from the world are typically not good candidates for the SFO.
5. A person who realizes that we are all sinful people in need of conversion. "Perfect" people do not need the SFO, and the SFO certainly does not need them!
6. A person who has at least some knowledge of the persons and spirits of Francis and Clare of Assisi.
7. A person who is willing and able to make a commitment to the *Rule of the SFO* and to live in fraternity. Basic communication skills are needed to listen to and interact with our brothers and sisters in fraternity.
8. A person who trusts in God and realizes that God is needed in his/her life. Anyone who is prejudiced, arrogant and closed-minded will not make a good candidate for the SFO.
9. A person who has a reverence for all of creation. Courtesy and respect are part of the spirit of reverence for all of creation.
10. A person who is willing to live the countercultural reality of a life in fraternity. Secular Franciscans live in fraternity and are willing to share creative ideas and life with others.

**IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT, THE FRATERNITY
RECEIVES THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT!!!**

Source: Adapted by David and Thérèse Ream, S.F.O., from: Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., *Catch Me A Rainbow Too*, 1999, pages 49-51. Lindsborg, KS: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises, 2005)

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Signs that a person may NOT have a call to the S.F.O.

1. A person who already belongs to a religious Order or another “Third Order” may **not** belong to the SFO.
2. A person who is a non-Catholic may **not** be received as an Inquirer into the SFO, although may be able to participate to some extent in the life of a fraternity. Good dialogue can determine a healthy form of participation.
3. A person who has interpersonal problems, problems with relationships, or wants to escape home or family problems is **not** likely to be a good candidate for the SFO. The SFO is not a therapy group/society, although we do offer our members supportive encouragement.
4. A person who is a “professional joiner” is **not** a good candidate for the SFO.
5. A person who forces personal devotions and ideas on others is **not** a good candidate for the SFO.
6. A person who is too individualistic and self-centered is **not** likely to be a good candidate for the SFO. The SFO fraternity must be united by a common goal, a sense of mission and a common desire to integrate life and Gospel, “going from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel” (*SFO Rule*, art. #4).
7. A person whose lifestyle is obviously counter to the Gospel is **not** a good candidate for the SFO.
8. A person who continuously gossips, or criticizes everything and everybody, or is irresponsible in family and/or work situations, or has addictions and does nothing to change (such as seeking professional help) is **not** a good candidate for the SFO.
9. A person with rigid and unbending opinions and attitudes is **not** a good candidate for the SFO. The SFO does not need dictators! We are involved in servant leadership and need to work collaboratively.
10. A person who uses violence, power or prestige to control life is **not** suitable for a Gospel way of life.

**IF THERE IS ANY DOUBT, THE FRATERNITY
RECEIVES THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT!!!**

Source: Adapted by David and Thérèse Ream, S.F.O., from: Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., *Catch Me A Rainbow Too*, 1999, pages 25-27. Lindsborg, KS: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises, 2005)

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**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS
Part II: The Inquiry Phase**

When we look at the Secular Franciscan formation process, it is important to see it as a continuum, that is, each stage flowing into the next. Aspects that are essential in the first phase, Orientation, will still be essential in the second, Inquiry, the third, Candidacy, and into the Ongoing Formation of professed members.

The Inquiry phase of initial formation is a time for the most serious and prayerful discernment of the Inquirer's vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order. During this phase of initial formation, the Fraternity and the Inquirer continue to get to know each other more fully. Opportunities for dialogue and sharing continue to be important to ensure that the aspirant and the Fraternity are compatible.

During Inquiry and ***before the Rite of Admission***, certain aspects of the relationship between the Inquirer and the Fraternity must be examined. Prior to the Rite of Admission, the Fraternity needs to be confident that the Inquirer has an adequate grasp of the Catholic faith to sustain their deeper journey into the Franciscan way of life. The Inquirer's life should reflect a determination not only to know the faith intellectually, but also to live the faith in practice. The Inquirer must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic faith. The Inquirer should understand and be able to articulate the concept of vocation and, more specifically, a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order.

Note the emphasis on "before the Rite of Admission." Once this Rite is celebrated, the Inquirers officially become Candidates and are admitted into a local Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order to prepare for permanent commitment. If the discernment of vocation is incomplete or mistaken during the Orientation and Inquiry phases, it must be rectified before the Rite of Admission takes place.

- The Inquiry phase, as the first formal period of initiation, is a time of discernment and choice of the Franciscan life. During this time, the Inquirer participates in the life of the Fraternity and comes to understand our way of life. At the same time, the Fraternity comes to know the Inquirer better, so that it can discern how best to respond to the Inquirer's request to become part of the Fraternity.
- The Inquiry phase begins with the Ceremony of Welcoming. This is a simple paraliturgical service that promises the support of the Fraternity on the journey that the Inquirer is about to undertake. It does not take place as a separate ritual, but as part of the regular meeting or gathering of the Fraternity.
- During this phase, the Inquirer, with the help of the Formation Director/Team, must seek to determine honest responses to these basic questions:

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- What is a vocation, and how am I called?
- What is Gospel life, and how am I called to live it?
- What is a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order, and am I called to live this way of life?

- **Time frame: *at least*** six months

- **Suggested content for the Inquiry phase:**
 - a deeper understanding of discernment and vocation specifically to the SFO
 - awareness of the agents of formation (see *Guidelines for Initial Formation*)
 - a more in-depth study of the life of Saint Francis (a more scholarly version, such as *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography* by Englebert)
 - a more in-depth study of the life of Saint Clare (a more scholarly version, such as *Clare of Assisi* by Bartoli; or *Clare: Her Light and Her Song* by Karper)
 - first-hand exposure to the writings of Saints Francis and Clare (as contained in, for example, *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life* by Armstrong; *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works* by Armstrong & Brady; and *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents* by Armstrong)
 - history of the Secular Franciscan Order, including the evolution of its Rules
 - overview of the organizational structure of the Secular Franciscan Order
 - introduction to the *SFO Rule, General Constitutions of the SFO* and the *SFO Ritual*
 - introduction to Sacred Scripture and how it impacts the life of a Secular Franciscan (the practice of *Lectio Divina* as contained in, for example, *Too Deep For Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* by Hall)
 - the Catholic Church in light of the Second Vatican Council (especially the documents *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*)
 - the *SFO Rule* in light of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*
 - an understanding of spirituality which is both secular and (for most aspirants) lay
 - the family (*SFO Rule*, article 17; *Constitutions*, article 24)
 - work (*SFO Rule*, article 16; *Constitutions*, article 21.1-2)
 - social and political involvement (*SFO Rule*, article 14; *Constitutions*, article 22)
 - introduction to praying the *Liturgy of the Hours*
 - other Franciscan prayer experiences

Rite: Rite of Admission (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 11-17)

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Documents:

- a. Application to Candidacy; Letter to Council to Continue (or Interview)
(cf. *Essential Documents of the SFO*, page 29)

Bibliography:

- Armstrong OFM Cap., Regis J. (1993, revised & expanded). *Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*. Saint Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications.
- Armstrong OFM Cap., Regis J. (1994). *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings for a Gospel Life*. NY: Crossroad.
- Armstrong OFM Cap., Regis J. & Brady OFM, Ignatius C. (1982). *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Bartoli, Marco. (1993). *Clare of Assisi*. Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press.
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- Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Order in the United States*. (1985). Lindsborg, KS: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises.
- Hall RC, Thelma. (1988). *Too Deep For Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina*. Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.
- Karper PCPA, Karen. (1990). *Clare: Her Light and Her Song*. Chicago, IL: Franciscan Herald Press (now available from Franciscan Press, Quincy, IL).

Published by the National Formation Commission as Part 2 of a four-part statement on the process of Secular Franciscan formation in the United States, March 2001, revised 2005.

Recommended Texts for Inquirer and Candidate Initial Formation

CATCH ME A RAINBOW TOO – Fr. Lester Bach, OFM, Cap.

COME AND SEE - Fr. Lester Bach, OFM, Cap. (Companion to Rainbow Too)

FULLY MATURE WITH THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST – Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM

FROM GOSPEL TO LIFE - Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM (Companion to Fully Mature)

TO LIVE AS FRANCIS LIVED – Foley, Wiegel, Normile

SFO 1978 Rule, 2001 SFO General Constitution and 2003 National Fraternity Statues

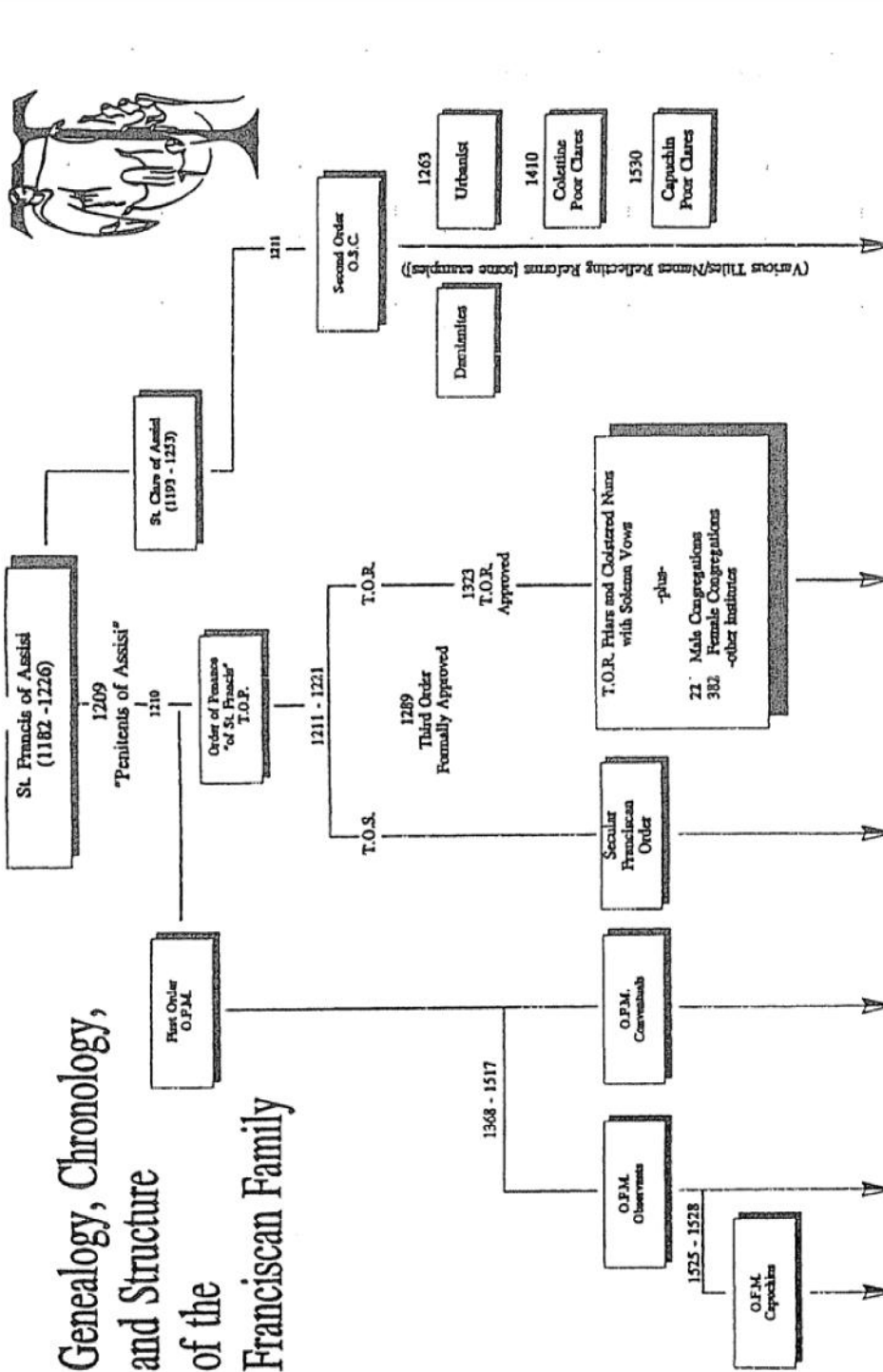
Material is available from any of the following resources.

- Franciscan Resources, 1-800-772-6910 or franres@wcta.net
- The Franciscan Store, (262) 767-3630,(Call for catalog)
- Barbo-Carlson Enterprises, (785) 227-2364

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Genealogy, Chronology, and Structure of the Franciscan Family



The "Second Order" or "Poor Clares" is for women only and is cloistered.
Credit to: Michael J. Higgins, TOI
Permission Granted: 3/1/88

The Order of Penitents, called the "Third Order" because of its "relaxed" composition, embraces men and women, lay and religious. Indeed, it is "Secular" (men and women living with their families) and "Regular" (men and women living in community and professing religious vows).

The Order of Friars Minor is composed only of men, therefore, according to Canon Law, is also known as the "First Order."

Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading) The 4 R's



Lectio Divina (Sacred Reading)

The 4 R's

- 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 you 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 affect 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 you.

Remember: God's first language is Silence

Summary of the SFO Rule (Six Statements)

1. a community of brothers and sisters
2. on pilgrimage to God
3. committed to live the Gospel
4. following the spirit of St. Francis
5. according to a rule and as secular people
6. in communion with all Franciscans

Seventeen Essential Elements of Secular Franciscan Spirituality

1. to live the gospel according to the spirit of St. Francis
2. to be converted continually (metanoia)
3. to live as a brother or sister of all people and of all creation
4. to live in communion with Christ
5. to follow the poor and crucified Christ
6. to share in the life and mission of the Church
7. to share in the love of the Father
8. to be instruments of peace
9. to have a life of prayer that is personal, communal and liturgical
10. to live in joy
11. to have a spirituality of a secular nature
12. to be pilgrims on the way toward the Father
13. to participate in the Apostolate of the Laity
14. to be at the service of the less fortunate
15. to be loyal to the church in an attitude of dialogue and collaboration with her ministers
16. to be open to the action of the Spirit
17. to live in simplicity, humility and minority

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HOW TO PRAY THE DIVINE OFFICE

The Divine Office, or Liturgy of the Hours, is a very ancient prayer going back to the early monks of the desert. Individual prayer among the early Christians took three forms: the Our Father, the Psalms, or the *Kyrie*. One basic method of prayer for monks and nuns was simply to recite all 150 Psalms all day long, or to repeat a particular Psalm throughout the day. A more popular practice began of saying 150 "Our Father's" a day (in imitation of the 150 Psalms), which grew into the Rosary. Meanwhile, a formula developed for the Office as well, with particular Psalms being assigned to particular days. The form of the Office today consists of the following:

1. To begin with, every psalm or canticle has an Antiphon (repeated at every stanza in formal recitation, but it can be said only once during private prayer), and is followed by the prayer "Glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever."
2. The first time the Offices is recited, it opens with an "Invitatory" -- "Lord open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise", then the Antiphon, then the Psalm (usually 95, but 100, 67, or 24 can be substituted). At other hours, the prayer "God come to my assistance, Lord make haste to help me" is said to open the Office, followed by the "Glory be."
3. An appropriate hymn or poem.
4. Three Psalms (or two Psalms and a Canticle from another book of the Bible, particularly Daniel, Revelation or one of the Pauline Epistles), each with an antiphon and the "Glory be". Sometimes a formal prayer is placed after one of the Psalms.
5. The Reading: usually from an epistle.
6. A moment of silence/meditation. Meditations or sermons may be used, but a moment of silence should always be observed following the reading.
7. Then there's a responsory. A line is read, then repeated. A different line is read, and responded to by the second half of the first. Then the original line is repeated, and the "Glory be" is the response.
8. After the responsory, another canticle is read. In the morning, it is the "Benedictus", the "Canticle of Zechariah." In the evening, it is the "Magnificat", the "Canticle of Mary." At night, it is the "Nuncdimittis," the "Canticle of Simeon". As usual, the canticle has an antiphon and is followed by the "Glory be".
9. Intercessions follow, much the same as the "General Intercessions" or "Prayers of the Faithful" said at Mass (except that these are set prayers for the entire church).
10. The office closes with a prayer, usually the same prayer that is the "Opening prayer" for the Masses of that day. This is followed by a blessing.

Additional material is available from any of the following resources:

St. Thomas More House of Prayer (www.liturgyofthehours.org)

THE DIVINE OFFICE FOR DODOS! – Madeline Pecora Nugent (www.universalis.com)

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**THE COMMUNAL CELEBRATION OF MORNING AND EVENING PRAYER FROM
THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS**

Based on official rubrics, this model for praying the Liturgy of the Hours is proposed and advocated by the National Formation Commission.

Note: This arrangement requires at least three distinct roles: the Presider or Leader; the Antiphonarian; and the Reader.

THE INVITATORY (Stand)

- Presider: "Lord, open my lips" (all make the sign of the cross + over their lips)
- Everyone: "And my mouth will proclaim your praise."
- Presider: Recites the invitatory antiphon.
- Everyone: Repeats invitatory antiphon.
- Presider: Reads a stanza/strophe from the invitatory psalm (always chosen from Psalms 95, 100, 67, or 24).
- Everyone: Repeats invitatory antiphon.
- Presider: Continues to read each stanza.
- Everyone: Repeats invitatory antiphon after each stanza.
- Presider: Concludes the psalm with:
"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."
- Everyone: Repeats the invitatory antiphon.
(Continue with the Hymn as in Morning Prayer.)
MORNING PRAYER (if not begun by the Invitatory)
And EVENING PRAYER (Stand)
- Presider: "God, come to my assistance." (all bless themselves + with the sign of the cross)
- Everyone: "Lord, make haste to help me."
- Presider: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit."
- Everyone: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen. Alleluia"
(Alleluia is omitted during Lent.)

THE HYMN (Seasonal; sets the tone for the Hour or the Feast)

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THE PSALMODY (All sit)
(Ant. Is the abbreviation used for Antiphonarian)

Ant.: Prays the antiphon and the first line of the psalm stanza/strophe.
Ant.'s Side: Prays the second line of the psalm stanza and the rest of that stanza. The assembly alternates the psalm stanzas. At the end of each psalm, the "Glory" is prayed. This, too, is alternated:
One Side: "Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit."
Other Side: "As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."
Antiphon is repeated only by the Ant. alone.

PSALM PRAYER

Presider: (Introduces the psalm prayer with) "Let us pray."

Everyone then stands and the Presider prays the psalm prayer.
After the prayer, everyone is once again seated.
There is a brief pause for silent reflection between the psalms and canticle which make up the psalmody.

Ant.: Begins the next psalm with the antiphon and continues as with the first psalm.

THE READING (Reader can stand in place or at the ambo/lectern to proclaim the Scripture passage)

Reader: (Introduces the reading with) "A reading from the . . ."
Reader: (Ends the reading with) "The Word of the Lord."
Everyone: "Thanks be to God."
(There is a longer pause for silent reflection after the reading.)

THE RESPONSORY

Reader: Reads the opening verse.
Everyone: Repeats the opening verse.
Reader: Reads the second verse.

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- Everyone: Reads line after the second verse.
Reader: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.”
Everyone: Repeats the opening verse.

THE GOSPEL CANTICLE

(The Canticle of Zechariah is prayed for Morning Prayer and the Canticle of Mary for Evening Prayer)
(All stand and remain standing.)

- Ant.: Reads the antiphon and the first line of the Canticle.
Everyone: (All bless themselves + at the first line of the Canticle. The stanzas of the Canticle are alternated from side to side beginning with the Ant.’s side. The Canticle ends with the “Glory”.)
One Side: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.”
Other Side: “As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.”
(Antiphon is repeated only by the Ant. alone.)

THE INTERCESSIONS

- Presider: Prays the opening lines or introduction.
Everyone: Answers with the italicized response.
Reader: Reads the petition.
Everyone: Makes the response after the petition. (This continues with all of the petitions.)
Presider: Invites the assembly to add their own petitions. The response to be used is the one in italics after the opening lines or introduction.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (Said or sung in the orans position, that is, with upraised hands.)

- Presider: Introduces the Our Father as at Mass or may just begin the prayer with: “Our Father. . .”
Everyone: Prays the prayer in unison; does not end with “Amen”.

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THE CONCLUDING PRAYER

Presider: Prays the prayer proper to the day without the invitation “Let us pray.”

Everyone: “Amen.”

THE DISMISSAL

(A lay or non-ordained Religious presider uses the following dismissal)

Presider: “May the Lord bless us,” (all bless themselves + with the sign of the cross)
“protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.”

Everyone: “Amen.”

(A Priest/Deacon uses a different form of blessing and dismissal)

Cleric: The Lord be with you.

Everyone: And also with you.

Cleric: May almighty God bless you, + the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Everyone: Amen.

Cleric: Go in peace.

Everyone: Thanks be to God.

Source: Compiled by David and Therese Ream, S.F.O. 5/99

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**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS
Part III: The Candidacy Phase**

When we look at the Secular Franciscan formation process, it is important to see it as a continuum, that is, each stage flowing into the next. Aspects that are essential in the first phase, Orientation, will still be essential in the second, Inquiry, the third, Candidacy, and into the Ongoing Formation of professed members.

The time between the Rite of Admission and the Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel is the Candidacy phase of formation. This is a time for assisting and promoting the growth of the Candidate as a human person, as a Christian person, and as a Franciscan person. All three dimensions are interrelated and, if the vocation is true, will blend into one harmonious human being.

As in all phases of formation, it is essential that resources allow for dialogue and sharing between the Candidates and the Fraternity as well as among the Candidates themselves. This is a time for the Formation Director/Team to encourage the Candidates' growth in Franciscan spirituality and the practice of Gospel values. It is the time for the Candidates to take on a gradually more active role in the Fraternity and in society, especially by means of participation in Franciscan apostolates.

During Candidacy the Secular Franciscan Rule supplies the path, the approach, and the guide. Therefore, considerable emphasis is placed on reading, understanding, digesting and incarnating the Rule. The living out of the Rule is crucial in preparing for Profession since it provides the structure for growing in the spirit of penance and ongoing conversion within the context of the local Fraternity.

- Candidacy is **the most important** stage in the Initial Formation process since its purpose is to prepare the Candidate for a life-long commitment to live the *SFO Rule*, a mature and enduring decision to participate as fully as possible in the Church's life and mission according to the manner of Saint Francis.
- This period of formation begins with the Rite of Admission into the Secular Franciscan Order, the public acceptance by the Order of the Candidate's request and intention to live the Gospel life in the manner of Saint Francis as contained in the *SFO Rule* which has been approved by the Church.
- During Candidacy, the entire Fraternity participates in and nurtures the growth and development of the Candidate's evangelical living out of the *SFO Rule*.
- It is important that the Candidate be given opportunities to experience, interiorize, integrate and live out the Gospel values presented in the *SFO Rule*.
- **Time frame:** an extended period, ***lasting a minimum of eighteen months and up to a maximum of three years***. In particular circumstances, it may be prudent to extend the actual time of Candidacy beyond these norms to broaden and deepen the Candidate's formation experience.

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- **Suggested content for the Candidacy phase:**

- the *Prologue to the SFO Rule* (the *Volterra Letter*)
 - a thorough study of the 1978 *SFO Rule*
 - Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, and the opportunity to experience, interiorize and integrate Gospel values
 - Franciscan spirituality
 - Secular Franciscan apostolic life
 - a detailed study of the *SFO General Constitutions*
 - lives of Secular Franciscan saints and other Franciscans
 - **Franciscan** traditions and stories (such as the Franciscan crown rosary, Stations of the Cross, Greccio, Gubbio, etc.)
 - writings of Francis and Clare
 - introduction to Franciscan sources, including an understanding of the purpose of a medieval legend
 - continued experience in praying and leading the *Liturgy of the Hours*
 - other Franciscan prayer experiences (for example, the Transitus)
 - a detailed study of the *SFO Ritual*, especially the Rites of Profession
- A retreat may serve as a fitting formation experience prior to making Profession

Rite: Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 18-26), or Rite of Temporary Commitment (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 27-29)

Documents:

- a. Pre-Profession Interview (form provided in this section)
- b. Letter of Intent Regarding Profession (form provided in this section)

Published by the National Formation Commission as Part 3 of a four-part statement on the process of Secular Franciscan formation in the United States, March 2001, revised 2005.

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Pre-Profession Interview

(To be conducted IN PERSON by the Formation Director when the Candidacy Phase is completed—NOT to be completed in writing by the candidate.)

1. How do you feel that you have grown, if at all, during the formation period?

2. Did your time of formation meet your expectations regarding what you had hoped to learn about the Secular Franciscan way of life? What about your experience in the fraternity?

3. Do you sincerely expect to make a lifetime commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order especially to life within the fraternity?

4. Are you prepared to make your Profession-Commitment, a public declaration officially received by the Church, whereby you promise to strive for holiness by observing the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?

5. To what work or service within the SFO and the fraternity do you feel Jesus is calling you?

6. How would you like to see our fraternity grow in the years to come?

7. What suggestions do you have for enhancing the formation program for future Candidates?

8. What do you feel is the most important quality for a Secular Franciscan to have? Why?

Interviewer: _____ Date: _____

FOLLOWING THE INTERVIEW, THE CANDIDATE IS ASKED TO WRITE A LETTER OF INTENT REGARDING PROFESSION

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Sample Letter of Intent

(Fraternity Name)
(City, State)

To: (Name of Fraternity Minister)

From: _____
Candidate for Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order

Re: Letter of Intent Regarding Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order

I, _____ after prayerful discernment and through my formation experience with the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of (Fraternity Name), hereby request **Profession** to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, within the Secular Franciscan Order, by observing its Rule of Life.

I promise to live a life of service to the Kingdom of God, in the Roman Catholic Church and in the world, by living the Gospel and by seeking ways to follow the example of St. Francis of Assisi in rebuilding the Church and proclaiming Christ by my life and words.

To the extent that I am able, I promise to be active in the life of my fraternity, which I believe to be a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. I desire to support and improve the fraternity with my presence and my talents. I will regard the other fraternity members as brothers and sisters in Christ and St. Francis. I will put the fraternity first in my life and give our monthly meetings a high priority.

I understand what is being asked of me as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. I ask the fraternity to assist me and to pray for me always, as I will pray for my brothers and sisters in the fraternity. May God, in His love and mercy, guide and direct me on my journey.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

Prologue

Exhortation of Saint Francis to the Brothers and Sisters in Penance

In the name of the Lord!

Chapter 1

Concerning Those Who Do Penance

All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30), and love their neighbors as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39) and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because "the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (cf. Is 11:2) and he will make "his home and dwelling among them" (cf. Jn 14:23), and they are the sons of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50).

We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord Jesus Christ; we are brothers to him when we fulfill "the will of the Father who is in heaven" (Mt 12:50).

We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give life to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16).

Oh, how glorious it is to have a great and holy Father in heaven! Oh, how glorious it is to have such a beautiful and admirable Spouse, the Holy Paraclete.

Oh, how glorious it is to have such a Brother and such a Son, loved, beloved, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:15) and prayed to the Father saying:

"Oh, holy Father, protect them with your name (cf. Jn 17:11) whom you gave me out of the world. I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me and they received it. They have known that in truth I came from you; they have believed that it was you who sent me. For these I pray, not for the world (cf. Jn 17:9). Bless and consecrate them, and I consecrate myself for their sakes. I do not pray for them alone; I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word (cf. Jn 17:20) that they may be holy by being one, as we are (cf. Jn 17:11). And I desire, Father, to have them in my company where I am to see this glory of mine in your kingdom" (cf. Jn 17:6-24).

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Chapter 2

Concerning Those Who Do Not Do Penance

But all those men and women who are not doing penance and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and live in vices and sin and yield to evil concupiscence and to the wicked desires of the flesh, and do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, and are slaves to the world, in their bodies, by carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life (cf. Jn 8:41).

These are blind, because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ; they do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God who is the true wisdom of the Father. Concerning them, it is said, "Their skill was swallowed up" (Ps 107:27) and "cursed are those who turn away from your commands" (Ps 119:21). They see and acknowledge; they know and do bad things and knowingly destroy their own souls.

See, you who are blind, deceived by your enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, for it is pleasant to the body to commit sin and it is bitter to make it serve God because all vices and sins come out and "proceed from the heart of man" as the Lord says in the gospel (cf. Mt 7:21). And you have nothing in this world and in the next, and you thought you would possess the vanities of this world for a long time.

But you have been deceived, for the day and the hour will come to which you give no thought and which you do not know and of which you are ignorant. The body grows infirm, death approaches, and so it dies a bitter death, and no matter where or when or how man dies, in the guilt of sin, without penance or satisfaction, though he can make satisfaction but does not do it.

The devil snatches the soul from his body with such anguish and tribulation that no one can know it except he who endures it, and all the talents and power and "knowledge and wisdom" (2 Chr 1:17) which they thought they had will be taken away from them (cf. Lk 8:18; Mk 4:25), and they leave their goods to relatives and friends who take and divide them and say afterwards, "Cursed be his soul because he could have given us more; he could have acquired more than he did." The worms eat up the body and so they have lost body and soul during this short earthly life and will go into the inferno where they will suffer torture without end.

All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God (cf. 1 Jn 4:17) to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above. And let those who do not know how to read have them read to them.

And may they keep them in their mind and carry them out, in a holy manner to the end, because they are "spirit and life" (Jn 6:64).

And those who will not do this will have to render "an account on the day of judgment" (cf. Mt 12:36) before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 14:10).

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Chapter One:

The Secular Franciscan Order

1. The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God -- laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi. In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.
2. The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in this family circle. It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.
3. The present rule, succeeding "Memoriale Propositi" (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Its interpretation belongs to the Holy See and its application will be made by the General Constitutions and particular statutes.

Chapter Two: The Way Of Life

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. 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 gospel.
5. Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of St. Francis, who often said, "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood," should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.
6. 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 words.
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 dialog of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.
7. United by their vocation as "brothers and sisters of penance" and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls "conversion." Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.
On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace.
8. As 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.

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9. The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.
10. United themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed His will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfill the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to Him even in difficulties and persecutions.
11. Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.
Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.
12. Witnessing to the good yet to come and obligated to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.
13. As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous 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.
14. Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone "who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself," let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.
15. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.
16. Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.
17. In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for His Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.
18. Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.
19. 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 the Father.

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Chapter Three: Life In Fraternity

20. The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels -- local, regional, national, and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the constitutions.
21. On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister who are elected by the professed according to the constitutions. Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community. Within themselves the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions, and under the guidance of their respective council.
22. The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes 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.
23. Requests for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order must be presented to the local fraternity, whose council decides upon the acceptance of new brothers and sisters. Admission into the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation of at least one year, and profession of the rule. The entire community is engaged in the process of growth by its own manner of living. The age for profession and the distinctive Franciscan sign are regulated by the statutes. Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment. Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue. Withdrawal or permanent dismissal from the Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity council according to the norm of the constitutions.
24. To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity. The communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.
25. Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils.
26. As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the councils on various levels, in keeping with the constitutions, shall ask for suitable and well prepared religious for spiritual assistance. They should make this request to the superiors of the four religious Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries. To promote fidelity to the charism as well as observance of the rule and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity, the minister or president, with the consent of the council, should take care to ask for a regular pastoral visit by the competent religious superiors as well as for a fraternal visit from those of the higher fraternities, according to the norm of the constitutions.

"May whoever observes all this be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father, and on earth with that of his beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter."

(Blessing of St. Francis from the *Testament*)

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Section III

Ongoing Formation

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**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS
Part IV: The Ongoing Formation Phase**

When we look at the Secular Franciscan formation process, it is important to see it as a continuum, that is, each stage flowing into the next. Aspects that are essential in the first phase, Orientation, will still be essential in the second, Inquiry, the third, Candidacy, and into the Ongoing Formation of professed members.

The purpose of the Ongoing Formation Phase is to support the professed members' commitment, and to strengthen their Franciscan vocation so that the ongoing conversion process will continue as a lifestyle.

Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a permanent and continuous way. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each and everyone and in the fulfillment of their proper mission in the Church and in society” (*General Constitutions*, article 44.1).

Ongoing Formation is a process of renewal for the entire Fraternity by which we are encouraged and challenged to live our vocation in the actual situations and contingencies of daily living.

Ongoing Formation is the outgrowth of proper Initial Formation, realizing that we are in a continual process of conversion and growth all the days of our life.

Ongoing Formation necessarily includes additional information and updating in various areas of spirituality, and deepening of our commitment to the Gospel life. None of us ever completes formation; it is a lifelong process.

Monthly Fraternity gatherings are the ordinary place for Ongoing Formation. Other opportunities for Ongoing Formation include:

- retreats
- days of renewal
- community celebrations
- interaction between fraternities
- interaction with the Friars, the Poor Clares, the Third Order Religious
- attendance at Regional and National gatherings
- workshops and seminars

Suggested content for the Ongoing Formation phase:

- the *Prologue to the SFO Rule (the Volterra Letter)*
- a detailed study of the *1978 SFO Rule*
- writings of Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and other Franciscan authors

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- Franciscan history
- articles from **TAU-USA**
- papal encyclicals, apostolic letters and statements
- pastoral statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- official documents and statements of the Franciscan Family
- detailed study of the *SFO Ritual* and *General Constitutions of the SFO*
- International, National and Regional statutes
- other Franciscan prayer experiences (for example, the Office of the Passion)
- experiencing each other's apostolates

Rite: Ceremony on the Anniversary of Profession (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 30-32)

Published by the National Formation Commission as Part 4 of a four-part statement on the process of Secular Franciscan formation in the United States, March 2001, revised 2005.

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CIOFS - Ongoing formation

Formation must follow the rhythm of life if it is itself to be living and vital; while retaining a basic identity it has to "renew itself" continually, as life renews itself continually, if it is to remain true and real. It has to know how to find "nourishment" from various human situations so as to bring them into harmony with the light and power of Christ, the truth and the life, just as life does, when it converts the different foods with which it nourishes itself into blood and vital juices. Of its very nature it is a permanent reality.

There are three reasons for this:

- *the perfectibility of a human being*, which lasts throughout life and can never be said to be completed.
- *the purpose to be attained* : the perfection which is its inspiration is the perfection of our heavenly Father (cf. Mt. 5:48).
- *human situations continually change*.

Ongoing formation, therefore, is required for the progressive realization of the Secular Franciscan in the unending journey towards "mature humanhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

It is fidelity to one's vocation and a stimulus on the way of that continuous conversion which should lead each one to conform their way of thinking and acting to that of Christ (cf. Rule 7), which is the mark of the "maturity" of the disciples of the Gospel.

It finds its proper foundation and its original motivation in the dynamism of the gift received, the vocation in which one must walk in a way worthy of it (cf. Eph. 4:1), so as to make it unailing (cf. 2 Pet. 1:10), under the action of the Holy Spirit, who strengthens the inner person, making each one know the greatness of the mystery of Christ and his love. (cf. Eph. 3:16-19).

It is God himself, therefore, who animates his gift and releases the extraordinary wealth of grace and responsibility included in it, for the good of the individual and of the community. Indeed, the Secular Franciscan, "moved by the Holy Spirit", enters the Secular Franciscan Order (Rule 2), and it is the Holy Spirit who leads each one into the Truth which is Christ, the gift of the Love of the Father and the Way to Him (cf. Rule 4). Christ is the Truth and the infinite Gift.

One can understand, therefore, why Francis "never thought for a moment that he had reached the winning-post, and tirelessly persevering in his purpose of holy renewal, always hoped to be able to begin afresh-" (1 Cel 103).

Ongoing formation must lead to:

- a deeper, more personal knowledge of the faith and of Franciscan spirituality.
- a more responsible and missionary commitment to Christ in the Church, in a specifically Franciscan way;
- a more generous and real openness to others, living an evangelical life which puts into action the movement from the Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel (cf. Rule 4).

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It must:

- conserve an intrinsic link with initial formation, a link which, as a vital and unifying element, as life goes on, demands adaptations, updating and modifications, without breaking or destroying the continuity;
- keep alive the general and integral process of continuous maturation, by deepening each of the dimensions of formation -- the human, the Christian and the Franciscan - - and of their own intimate and living unity.
- repeat the process with increasing responsibility when faced with new situations, new problems, changed cultural and social situations which require deeper reflection on the Word of God and the teaching of the Church so as to obtain from each the light and strength needed for a just and effective way of life, holding firmly to the gospel message lived after the manner of Saint Francis.

Ongoing formation:

- 1) *Ensures* the maintenance of the formation already received, and renews it continuously, furthers and completes it, perfects it, and facilitates the enrichment of it by creating the demand needed to generate change. In particular it develops exhaustively everything which concerns the acquisition of a form of life which is in harmony with:
 - the transformation of the faith into Christian wisdom by which we may resolve great problems in the light of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church;
 - the assimilation of the spirit and the style of Saint Francis with an effective plan for the Franciscan view of life.
- 2) *Promises* continual renewal either regarding the deepening of the truths already acquired or the constant development of oneself when meeting the realities of the Church and civil society. It is a moral duty which is binding and in need of development throughout the whole of life.
- 3) *Involves* -- facing the problems emerging in the life of the Church and society;
 - seeking adequate solutions which are inspired by the Gospel, the teaching of the Church, the life of Saint Francis and the history of the Secular Franciscan Order;
 - the renewal of traditional activities which call for new forms of expression that better correspond to the needs of the times,
 - the search for new (voluntary) activities;
 - an intelligent and open meeting with other groups in the Church who are competent to meet the needs and attentive to the problems of contemporary society.

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What Our National Statutes and General Constitutions State

National Statutes:

Article 19 Formation

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].

General Constitutions:

Article 44

1. Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a permanent and continuous way. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each and every one and in the fulfillment of their proper mission in the Church and in society [cf. *General Constitutions*, # 8; 1 *Celano*, 103].
2. The Fraternity has the **duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed** and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.
3. **Ongoing formation** – accomplished by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experience – aims to assist the brothers and sisters:
 - *Rule 4* in listening to and meditating on the Word of God, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel;"
 - in reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith, and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions;
 - in discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by **studying the writings of Saint Francis, Saint Clare and Franciscan authors**.

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On-going Formation is a time to support and strengthen a Secular Franciscan's vocation in their lifetime commitment.

The **General Constitution** recommends

- pertinent **Catholic resources** that would sustain the growth on the human, Christian, Catholic dimension of a Secular Franciscan, including papal encyclicals, apostolic letters and statements, pastoral statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

- **Franciscan Documents** including the *Prologue to the SFO Rule* (the *Volterra Letter*), a detailed study of the 1978 *SFO Rule*, Franciscan history, articles from **TAU-USA** and **La Pobrecita**, official documents and statements of the Franciscan Family, detailed study of the *SFO Ritual* and *General Constitutions of the SFO*, International, National and Regional statutes

- **studying the writings** of Saint Francis, Saint Clare, Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, and **Franciscan authors**.

Contemporary Franciscan Authors include:

- ✓ Lester Bach, OFM Cap.
- ✓ Teresa Baker, SFO
- ✓ Ilia Delio, O. S. F.
- ✓ Benet A. Fonck, OFM
- ✓ Regis Armstrong
- ✓ Murray Bodo, OFM

Other recommended books for Ongoing Formation:

- ✓ Publications of The Franciscan Institute (St. Bonaventure University):
 - Franciscan Heritage/Franciscan Intellectual Tradition Series
 - *Build with Living Stones*
- ✓ Books published by our National Formation Committee:
 - *Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order* by Mulqueen and Sanborn
 - Texts by Lester Bach, OFM Cap., or Teresa Baker, SFO
- ✓ *To Live As Francis Lived* by Leonard Foley, Jovian Weigel, Patti Normile
- ✓ SFO Sharing Guides by Fr. John Sullivan OFM

The **most common method** of ongoing formation within the Lady Poverty Region is to have the members of the local fraternity **select a text as the CORE** of their formation program and work through it, reading and discussing the material together. Each member of the fraternity should have a copy of the book or provided with a copy of the assigned material at least **one month in advance** so that all members can participate in the discussion. Other ongoing formation material/topics may be used along with the Core program as desired to add variety to the program as long as the material is available to all members at least one month in advance.

FORMATION (INITIAL AND ONGOING)

Questions that we should be asking ourselves – and our brothers and sisters:

1. Do we always include prayer experiences for our gatherings/meetings (especially Franciscan prayer)?
2. Do we have formation at our monthly (regular) meetings/gatherings?
3. Do we ask the involvement of everyone in planning the formation experience?
4. How do we utilize the gifts and talents of our brothers and sisters in presenting formation?
5. Do we take turns facilitating the formation experience?
6. Do we consider different ways of presenting materials?

Videos, DVDs
audio tapes, CDs
slides
outside presenters

discussions with 2, 3, or 4 people
panel presentations
questions and answers
using *TAU-USA* articles

(What are some other ways?)

7. Do we have a long term vision for formation?
8. Do we use a variety of formational resources to enhance our formation experiences?

We should also ask this question:

Do we have regular ongoing formation for the newly professed?

Source: Compiled by David & Thérèse Ream, S.F.O., National Formation Commission, 1999, Revised 2005

Approaches to Initial and Ongoing Formation:

The Method of Groome's Shared Christian Praxis Applied to Secular Franciscan Formation

1. **Present Action:** the individual names a present attitude or behavior relevant to the topic under consideration;
2. **Critical Reflection:** the individual reflects on what has influenced his or her present attitude or behavior on the topic;
3. **Dialogue:** the individual is exposed to formational material relevant to the topic (e.g., text, invited speaker, literature, music, film, prayer, etc.) and conversation follows;
4. **The Wider Story:** the individual is encouraged to examine her or his personal experience in relation to the experience of the wider Christian and Franciscan community;
5. **The Wider Vision:** the individual is invited to relate the topic to his or her present experience and then to develop a Franciscan response.

Source: Adapted from Thomas H. Groome's *Christian Religious Education*, Harper & Row Publishers, Inc.: New York, 1981

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**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS
Part V: Guidelines for Newly Professed**

General Constitutions Article 44

2 The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.

Formation of the newly professed this is taking place in many fraternities through various means. However, we feel that the obligation placed on the local formation directors to oversee initial and ongoing formation processes might become overwhelming. The newly professed seems to be the group that is most vulnerable to lack of time and consideration, or numerous participants. Therefore we set out:

Guidelines for Regional Formation Gatherings of the Newly Professed

Time Frame: four meetings within a year

How and Where:

- Meeting in groups at Regional Fraternity gatherings
- Meetings in clusters, areas, districts (however your regional fraternity is divided into smaller groups)
- Meetings with other local fraternities or other groups of newly professed

Why:

- deepening of their initial permanent profession experience
- provide a support system
- a more gradual transition from a small intimate group setting to a larger group

Content:

- how is your vocation growing
- what are its good points, its bad points; its ups, its downs
- what new surprises have you discovered
- what new insights
- what does it mean to be professed
- how are you giving ecclesial witness
- what apostolate are you involved in
- how has your prayer life changed
- what do you find easy to follow in the Rule; what do you find difficult
- were your expectations of profession met
- what improvements would you offer to formation process
- do you feel as if you fit in

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Structure: 4 meetings a year of the Newly Professed

1. Regional Day of Unity

- As your Region gathers for its annual Day of Unity, invite the Newly Professed.
- have them gather together in their own session to share
 - how is your vocation going?
 - what do you find difficult about not being in the smaller formation group?
 - what new insights have you gained?
 - what has surprised you?
 - what has happened that you did not expect?

2. Day of Recollection

- Regional Executive Council invites the newly professed to a Day of Recollection set up just for them
- Invite them to a uniquely Franciscan prayer experience
- Have someone present them with a talk that is timely to their professional situation
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - how has their prayer life changed
 - what does it mean to be professed
 - What were their expectations?
 - have their expectations of being a professed Franciscan been met?
 - have them share their initial formational experiences

3. Clusters of Newly Professed

- clusters, districts, areas, local fraternities gather the newly professed together in smaller groupings
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - what are their fraternal issues?
 - Are they feeling more included?
 - what surprises continue to unfold for them
 - what new insights are they gaining as they enter more deeply into fraternal life
 - how has this time of gathering together enhanced their lives?

4. Gathering with other Newly Professed

- of the Franciscan family, friars, Clares, Brothers and sisters of the Third Order
- other Third Order groups in your area
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - how do we give an ecclesial witness
 - what apostolate are we involved in?
 - do we reach out to other ecumenical gatherings
 - How might we continue to network?

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A METHOD FOR THE FORMATION OF THE NEWLY PROFESSED

The RCIA process in the Catholic Church has a post initiation phase known as ***Mystagogia***. The purpose of this phase is to encourage the newly initiated to become more familiar with the mysteries of our Faith and to motivate them to participate more fully in the Sacraments while they continue to grow in spiritual maturity.

The *General Constitutions of the SFO* (article #44.2) and the *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States* (Chapter III, F.2.a, page 28) advocate a Mystagogia-type phase for the newly professed so that they may have the opportunity to delve more deeply into the mysteries of Franciscan spirituality and to make the conversion process an integral part of their daily lives. The format which follows is offered with the hope that it will stimulate the newly professed to become spiritually mature Secular Franciscans.

The method is as follows:

1. A theme such as poverty or humility is selected.
2. An article from the *SFO Rule* which reinforces the theme is identified.
3. A short passage from Sacred Scripture relevant to the theme is chosen.
4. Participants reflect in silence on what the Rule and the Scripture passage are saying to them. This time of meditation is important to the process of surrender. Participants need this quiet time in order to listen to God's Word and to learn what Jesus is personally asking of each of them.
5. A member of the Formation Team then offers a short presentation which integrates and clarifies the theme in light of the Rule and the biblical reference.
6. Another period of reflective silence follows allowing the participants to interiorize what they have learned from the presentation.
7. The presenter or one of the participants reads a short, theme-related selection about St. Francis which illustrates how Francis lived out this theme in light of his relationship with Christ.
8. Journaling comes next in which the participants are asked to reflect upon and write about what this experience of St. Francis means to them.
9. The participants are then invited to imagine a situation that any of them might encounter on their spiritual journey in which St. Francis directly accompanies them.
10. Participants then write a letter to Jesus telling Him about their experience with St. Francis at their side (e.g., How did they feel knowing that Francis was a part of their experience? What did he say to them? How did he encourage them?).

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11. A period of sharing follows. Sharing is important in the growth of Fraternity members. We learn from one other as well as learning to hear what Christ has to say through another person.
12. The process ends with the communal praying of one of the prayers of St. Francis.

Here is a sample session on the theme of Humility:

THE SFO RULE: Chapter 2, Article # 11.

BIBLICAL REFERENCE: Philippians 2:3-11.

REFLECTIVE SILENCE: Quiet reflection on the passages as presented.

PRESENTATION: A short presentation on Franciscan humility is offered.

REFLECTIVE SILENCE: Quiet reflection on the presentation.

FRANCIS' EXPERIENCE: 1 Celano 17

JOURNALING: "Write about what St. Francis' experience of humility means to you."

GUIDED IMAGERY: "Imagine yourself volunteering at a soup kitchen for the homeless, or at an AIDS hospice with Francis at your side."

LETTER WRITING: "Write a letter to Jesus about your experience at the soup kitchen or hospice with St. Francis at your side."

SHARING:

PRAYER: Communal praying of one of the prayers of St. Francis.

*Please note that you can choose any Franciscan theme to explore using this method. The short Franciscan story for the Experience portion of the process may be selected from any reliable Franciscan source.

Source: Adapted from Nancy Lippert, S.F.O., a member of the St. Francis Regional Formation Commission. (She graciously gave the National Formation Commission her permission and her blessing for the use of this format, 2005)

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CIOFS - Formation of the Newly Professed

It is no exaggeration to say that the entire existence of the lay faithful has as its purpose to lead a person to a knowledge of the radical newness of the Christian life that comes from Baptism, the sacrament of faith, so that his knowledge can help that person live the responsibilities which arise from that vocation received from God" (*Christifideles Laici* [ChL] 10).

Formation is "a continual process in the individual of maturing in the faith and a likening to Christ, according to the will of the Father, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit" (ChL 57). These statements indicate the direction of an authentic formation;

- 1) *The model to be kept in mind:* The journey made by Jesus (Jn 16: 26)
"I came from the Father" (the source and principle of all things, the end of all perfection);
"and have come into the world" (the place appointed by the will of the Father to carry out his plan);
"now I am leaving the world" (in the sense of existence as a journey);
"I am going to the Father-" (the end and reward of a life lived for him and for the brethren).
- 2) *The point of departure for a journey of faith:* Call to mind the radical nature of Baptism. It regenerates by making the person a Christian, a brother or sister of Christ, a member of his Body the Church and a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) *The Guide for the journey:* The Holy Spirit. He reveals and sets us on the way to understanding the riches of Christ and leads us into all truth (cf. Eph. 3:16-19).

Formative activity at this stage takes the form of a journey of faith in the footsteps of Francis in the spirit of the Rule.

1) Starting point: Baptism

Francis lived intensely the Paschal Mystery of death and resurrection in Christ (the essence of Baptism), in full conformity with him (1 Cel 112-113). The determining role of the heavenly Father in his life; in him is his treasure, and all his trust and hope (LM II, 4), his spiritual family is a gift of the Father to the Son (Mirror of Perfection 26).

The person should be trained in confident and childlike abandonment into the hands of the Father, who has his own plans for each individual.

The Rule points out the truths of Baptism: death and resurrection in Christ (the beginning of a new life and of becoming children of God). Baptism makes us members of the Church and sharers in its mission. Profession "-reactivates-" Baptism in a responsible way; it strengthens our bonds with the Church and gives a special character to our sharing in its mission. Each person must develop a sense that they are a child of God and of the importance of the person of the Father in the life of the newly professed, so that each may continually discover more fully this essential relationship with Him, by keeping the Rule.

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The Father gives us the Son (Rule 4), and comes to meet us with his mercy in the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Rule 7), sees in every person the features of his Son (Rule 13), waits for us in his home, where he receives us in our final meeting with him (Rule 11;19). Special and significant attitudes of Jesus towards the Father: prayer (Rule 8), obedience (Rule 10), trust and poverty (Rule 11), etc.

2) *The Way*

a) *Christ, the centre of life*

Francis:

His highest inspiration, his dominant desire, his determined will to observe the Gospel faithfully and to carry out perfectly the teaching and example of Jesus Christ (1 Cel 84; 115). He was "-another Christ-", but did not consider that he had reached his goal and felt the need of "-conversion-" every day (1 Cel 103).

The Rule:

- Christ is the inspiration and the centre of life with God and with humanity (Rule 4).
- Inspiration: a dynamic force which directs and illumines us along the right way. Centre: towards which *we make* our thoughts and actions converge.
- to seek Christ
 - in the fraternity (here he is most immediate, within easy reach);
 - in the Scriptures (where he speaks to us and enlightens us);
 - in the Church (our mother and teacher);
 - in the liturgy (which recalls the mysteries of salvation (Rule 5)).
- to follow Christ the humble and obedient, poor and crucified, and to bear witness to him even amidst difficulties and persecutions (Rule 10).
- to contemplate him in his love for the Church his Spouse, so as to live in the fullness of the grace of matrimony and to make of one's own family a sign of a world already renewed in Christ (*General Constitutions of the SFO [Consts.] 17*).

b) *The Method*

- From the Gospel to life; from life to the Gospel (Rule 4).
- From the Gospel, to draw from it the principles, light and strength for our daily living so that the gospel message becomes a leaven and ferment within it.
- From life, with its multiplicity of situations and variety of problems, to the Gospel as the criterion by which we evaluate and judge them.

c) *The need for ongoing conversion:*

This is a necessary and indispensable condition for progress on the way and for the acquisition of an outlook of faith, so that it may enter into one's life, totally pervade it, and prevent one from conforming to the mentality of the world (Rom. 12:1).

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3) *The Purpose of the journey*

To reach "mature human-hood to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13), by conforming oneself to Christ until we can say "-it is no longer I that live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me-" (Gal. 2:20).

Francis:

"Imitating perfectly, he studied in life to be like the living Christ; in death, to be like the dying Christ; when dead, to be like the dead Christ; and he deserved the honor of bearing in his own body the visible image of Christ" (Saint Bonaventure's: "*Legenda Maior*" [LM] XIV, 4). It seemed as if "Christ and Francis were just one person" (2 Cel. 219). The way taught by Christ: to do the will of the Father "that has always been and still is most dear and sweet and acceptable, which it pleases the Lord my God should happen to me, and to his will alone do I wish to find myself conforming constantly and in all things, obedient and docile." (1 Cel. 107).

The Rule

Sees the whole journey of faith of the Secular Franciscan as "a radical interior transformation" so as to arrive, in the power of the Gospel, at "a conforming of one's way of thinking and acting to that of Christ" (Rule 7). And to be with him, "a true worshipper of the Father," making "prayer and contemplation the soul of one's life and work" (Rule 8). So one's life is planned and lived in conformity with the will of the Father in heaven, and made explicit day by day in each one's world of work, in union with Christ.

4) *The Guide on the Way*

Is the Holy Spirit. He testifies to the soul that each one is the child of God and sustains each person in the midst of weakness (Rom. 8:14-17.26-27); reminds us of the teaching of Christ and introduces us to the whole truth (Jn. 14:26; 16:13-14).

Francis

The perfect imitator of Christ; was filled with the Holy Spirit (LM XI, 2). He used to say that in order to follow in the footsteps of Christ we must be purified, enlightened and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, and that the essence of the Franciscan life is to have the Spirit of the Lord and his holy operation (Regula Bullata X, 10).

The Rule

Reminds the Secular Franciscan that the family of which he is a member is a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church (Rule 1); this is a vocation (Rule 2). To attain the end of this vocation, to reach the perfection of our secular state, each one must let themselves be guided by the Holy Spirit, who will lead us into all truth (Rule 4).

Major Legend for Ongoing Formation for the Newly Professed



The Major Life of Francis by Saint Bonaventure is a thematic telling of Francis' life based on Franciscan spirituality.

Have the Newly Professed:

- 1) read a chapter a month, each dealing with a different topic;
(there are 15 chapters and a Prologue);
- 2) read a writing of Francis that correlates to this topic;
(Formator chooses it ahead of time);
- 3) discern which articles of the *Rule* best speak to the topic;
- 4) discern and discuss how this aspect of Franciscan spirituality is present in their lives or how to try and make it present;
- 5) select (Formator chooses) from one of the Council Documents, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* or *The Church in the Modern World* or *Dei Verbum* to make this topic pertinent to Church teaching today;
- 6) select articles of the SFO *General Constitutions* that correspond with this aspect of Franciscan spirituality.

The main goals (not listed here in order of importance) of this approach to formation for the Newly Professed include:

- 1) Having the Newly Professed read an original source on Francis;
- 2) Having the Newly Professed read the Writings of Francis;
- 3) Having the Newly Professed delve into the *Rule* and *General Constitutions* of the Secular Franciscan Order and make them their own;
- 4) Having the Newly Professed reflect on the teachings of the Church;
- 5) Having the Newly Professed uncover the tenets of Franciscan spirituality;
- 6) Having the Newly Professed identify these tenets in their own lives;
- 7) *Allowing the Holy Spirit to be the primary agent of formation in their lives!*

Section IV

Resource Material

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