

Formation Program to Update Inactive Secular Franciscans Desiring to Return to Active OFS Life — Suggested Program

Reasons for Program

BSSF Regional Guidelines:

20. **Dealing with the return of inactive members (voluntarily withdrawn, suspended or inactive transferees)**
 - a) Voluntarily withdrawn or suspended members must make a written request to be readmitted in accordance with Article 57 of the General Constitutions. The council shall then make a decision based on the relevant facts.
 - b) Prior to accepting the return of an inactive professed member (including transferees), or one who had voluntarily withdrawn or had been suspended, the local fraternity will exercise a period of discernment (recommended 9–12 months) during which time the member faithfully attends all fraternity gatherings and participates in fraternity life. The local formation team and fraternity council will determine the necessary formation for the member using the current formation materials of BSSF Region. After the formation deemed necessary for this member and a secret vote by the council, the return/transfer will be approved or declined. The specific reasons for the decision of the council must be clearly documented.

General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order (2000)

Article 57

1. In the case of voluntary withdrawal or of suspension from the fraternity, the Secular Franciscan may ask to be readmitted by addressing an appropriate written request to the minister.
2. After examining the reasons offered by the person involved, the council evaluates whether the causes which led to the withdrawal or suspension can be considered as overcome. If the conclusion is affirmative, it readmits him or her and the decision is recorded in the proceedings of the fraternity.

Suggested procedure:

- Person attends three or more fraternity gatherings.
- Person talks with formation director and asks to start the 9- to 12-month period of discernment and formation.
- Person is assigned a formator.
- Person buys *For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation* (FUN manual) from fraternity; or he/she, formator, or formation director orders it and person reimburses for the cost. To order, go to www.nafra-sfo.org, click on Formation, scroll down to For Up to Now 2011, click on Ordering Information.

- Some material from the “Digests” will also be used, particularly in Session 2 with FUN manual Chapter 6, “The Franciscan Family: A Brief Introduction,” so fraternity could purchase them and make copies. The set of nine digests, available from Smoky Valley Printing for \$7.00 for the first set and \$3.00 for additional sets.

Digest articles can also be downloaded from the above NAFRA website. Go to Formation, click on [OFS Affiliate Orientation Plan](#). Scroll through the program to page 5, where the articles begin.

It is suggested that the 9- to 12-month period of discernment and formation take place before the person submits the written request to return, so that the individual can make an informed decision about whether or not to return, and so that the individual and fraternity can get to know each other.

Professed members who want to return to active OFS involvement may have been away from the Order for a number of years. Particularly in material such as the FUN manual, the OFS is described in ways we’ve never heard before.

When someone drops out of OFS involvement, it’s like stepping out of a stream — and the stream flows on by them. A lot of OFS has flowed on past someone who has been away from the Order for even a few years.

We wouldn’t expect someone who had been away from a technical profession for 5 or 15 or 20 years to return to it and be able to start functioning fully. Some updating would be required. We Secular Franciscans also have specialized knowledge we need in order to serve our fraternity and the Order. Things like vocation, nature of the Order, identity of Secular Franciscans, and profession are described in more detail than in the past. There are also concepts unique to our Region, especially the Four Pillars and the 12 Elements of the Spirituality of St. Francis.

Our International Presidency (CIOFS) developed a syllabus: topics that each national fraternity is to use as a basis for its nationwide formation program. As we are all one worldwide Order, all Secular Franciscans throughout the world are meant to have the same basic understanding of our OFS vocation.

The FUN manual (*For Up to Now: Foundational Topics for Initial Formation*) is our National Fraternity’s implementation of that CIOFS syllabus. It provides “a new **understanding** and **awareness of the role that the OFS**, and consequently every Secular Franciscan, has in the Church and the Franciscan Family” (FUN, Ch. 1, “Foundational Formation Topics,” p. 9).

An assessment of returnees’ understanding of the OFS should be based on where they are in this current understanding. Our ongoing formation is good, but it often doesn’t cover this basic material, so returnees won’t get that from what we have at fraternity gatherings.

Once they’re accepted into the fraternity, they’re eligible to serve on the council and as formators and sponsors. Do we really want council members, formators, and sponsors who aren’t up to date on what the OFS is all about?

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Formation Program to Update Inactive Secular Franciscans Desiring to Return to Active OFS Life — Suggested Agenda

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General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 57

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Program Outline

Orientation Session

- Purchase FUN manual from formation director or order from NAFRA
- Overview of formation program
- Procedure for coming into the fraternity (General Constitutions, Art. 57)

During our sessions, we'll discuss:

- any material about which person has questions,
- questions included in the chapters and/or provided by formator,
- how material has deepened person's understanding of Franciscanism and the Secular Franciscan way of life.

Session 1 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

- FUN, Chapter 6, “The Franciscan Family: A Brief Introduction”
- Digests (provided by facilitator):
 - #101 — “Francis of Assisi: Spiritual Father and Guide”
 - #121 — “Saint Clare Of Assisi: A Mother And Model For All Franciscans”
 - #131 — “Prayer: The Soul Of All We Secular Franciscans Are And Do”
 - #141 — “Christ the Center: The Franciscan Image of Christ”

Session 2 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:
FUN, Chapter 9, “The Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order”

Session 3 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:
FUN, Chapter 8, “Our Identity as a Secular Franciscan”

Session 4 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

- FUN, Chapter 7 — “Vocation: God’s Call”
- FUN, Chapter 10 — “Vocation, Charism & Mission of Secular Franciscans”

Session 5 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

FUN, Chapter 12 — “The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order”
“Prologue”
“Session 1: God Turns to Us” (pp. 5–17)

Session 6 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

FUN, Chapter 12 — “The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order”
“Session 2: We Turn to God” (pp. 18–27)

Session 7 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

FUN, Ch. 12 — “The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order”
“Session 3: We Turn to Others” (pp. 28–46)

Session 8 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

- Rule, Articles 1, 3, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26 (not covered in FUN)
- Read General Constitutions (download at www.nafra-sfo.org)

Session 9 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on:

FUN, Ch. 15, “Understanding Franciscan Theology, Tradition and Spirituality”

Session 10 — To prepare for this session, please read and reflect on this material, provided by facilitator from *BSSF Regional Formators’ Guidelines for Orientation and Initial Formation*)

- “The Four Pillars of Secular Franciscan Life”
- “The Spirituality of St. Francis (The 12 Elements)”

For the next two sessions — we'll use the following:

- “Profession in the SFO: Gift and Commitment,” by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, OFM Cap. (provided by facilitator)
- The questions in FUN manual, Chapter 16, “Profession and the Secular Franciscan,” by Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM
- Fr. Trezza’s YouTube presentations, “The Significance and Power of Profession”

Note: The YouTube presentations could be viewed at home prior to the session. There may be local companies that produce videos and can download the presentations onto a DVD at a reasonable price.

Session 11

To prepare for this session, please do the following:

- Read Fr. Cangelosi’s article, “Part I: Profession, A Gift of the Spirit,” page 1 through the middle of page 10.
- In FUN, Ch. 16, “Profession and the Secular Franciscan” answer questions 1–9, pages 16–17.

During the session we’ll view Part 1 of the YouTube presentation (38:42 minutes), and discuss the presentation, the written material, and the questions.

Session 12

To prepare for this session, please do the following:

- Read Fr. Cangelosi’s article, “Part II: The Commitment of Profession,” middle of page 10 through the bottom of page 18.
- In FUN, Ch. 16, “Profession and the Secular Franciscan,” answer questions 10–16, pages 17–18

During the session we’ll view Part 2 of the YouTube presentation (41:59 minutes), and discuss the presentation, the written material, and the questions.

