There are four pillars of foundation on which our Secular Franciscan Way of Life is based. These pillars are **Spirituality, Formation, Fraternity and Apostolate**. The questions are: what are they; how do they relate to this manual; how do they relate to each other and how do I apply them in a formation program.

Present formation programs already include the four pillars. By identifying them we can then make them concrete and thus make them a visible “game plan” on which to focus our formation. The four pillars give us developed focus of which we want our professed members to develop an awareness. It is crucial to include them in the total formation program.

When the commissions were brought to our attention we found out that we had already been living them. We found that they are all interconnected. So it is with the four pillars; we've already been living them or incorporating them into our formation programs and they are interconnected. By highlighting the four pillars, we hope to give local formation directors a “total plan” to augment already good formation programs.

In this manual we will attempt to indicate which areas of handouts from the National Formation Commission fall into the specific areas of each of the four pillars. In the future when more material is to be added to this manual we will attempt to give you direction as to which area it is to be inserted.

**SPIRITUALITY PILLAR**

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

The Spirituality Pillar must be anchored in prayer. It is the means to being attentive and pursuing the application of our Franciscan Spirituality on a daily basis. It goes without saying that it is the spirit of God that we wish to nourish and make strong within us. This internal quest is realized through the external stimulus of prayer. Prayer, being the lifting of the heart and mind to God, establishes the direction in which we as a whole person are to go. If there is quality and sincerity in private prayer then it will be extended to communal prayer and there will be life-giving worship. On the other hand, if there is rote recitation lacking spirit and vibrancy, then there is no prayer. Whatever prayer mode we engage - personal, communal, spontaneous or formulary - all is to be done with a vibrancy and spirit that truly engages the Almighty.

**Practical Application:**
- Study books such as *Six Ways to Pray From Six Great Saints*, i.e., Francis of Assisi and Clare of Assisi by Gloria Hutchinson; *To Live as Francis Lived* by Leonard Foley, OFM; Jovian Weigel, OFM and Patti Normile, SFO.
- Dialogue about the strengths and weaknesses of your personal prayer lives.
- Consider a teaching on the Liturgy of the Hours.
- Pray the Liturgy of the Hours in your private prayers.
  - This practice will nourish the communal prayer.
- This practice unites us with the whole Body of Christ through the ages in continuing the voice of creation; thus affecting the whole world by the Liturgy of Hours prayers.
- Review “Rubrics for the Communal Celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours” - BSSF Region.
- Keep in mind Francis’ Letter to the Whole Order - On Praying the Divine Office: With all earnestness, I ask my lord minister general to see to it that the clerics pray the Divine Office with devotion before God, not focusing on melody of voice but on harmony of mind, so that their voices be attuned to their thoughts, and their thoughts to God. Thus they will please God by the purity of their minds, and not charm people’s ears with the preciousness of their singing voices.
- Include spontaneous prayers in your fraternity gatherings.
- Explore and practice Contemplative Prayer as a community and in private. Videos are available.
- Focus on Franciscan spirituality.

FORMATION PILLAR

Formation is the vehicle whereby we learn to internalize and integrate Franciscan Spirituality into every aspect of our lives - into our Franciscan Way of Life. This includes our fraternity life and our good works or our apostolic life. Formation serves to direct us to identify and utilize our time, our talent and our resources. As a wise Secular Franciscan once said, “Formation doesn’t end until ten minutes after we get into heaven!” It is a life long process.

Practical Application:
- Address initial and ongoing formation by way of the four pillars - SPIRITUALITY, FORMATION, FRATERNITY AND APOSTOLATE.

The intent of addressing formation by the four pillars is to promote uniformity and consistency in our formation and unity in our region. Our goal is to promote optimum formation and a firm foundation to live our Secular Franciscan way of life by giving guidance. We seek to move from a time framed consideration to a reality lived mode of formation. When an individual aspirant along with those responsible for evaluation believe the aspirant is ready to move to the next phase of formation then and only then should that individual enter the next phase. The aspirant should demonstrate a certain level of facility in living the four pillars. If the individual is lacking, he or she is to be further schooled in living the integration of the four pillars. Becoming obvious in these last statements our formation is becoming more personal and individual rather than communal and class. This addresses two realities. Class approaches almost always indicate a certain and uniform time frame of beginning and ending. Thus the expectation to have a designated ending. We know from experience that the human spirit does not operate on such timetables. For an individual to truly internalize and integrate elements of a way of life that call for life adjustments does not happen on a prescribed timetable. What is the
objective of our formation program? Is not its objective to have the individuals both internalize and integrate the four basic elements of our Franciscan life? Accepting these facts of time and intent we remove the burden of having to “make ready the product” in a prescribed timeframe.

As the formators address formation by the four pillars, they will keep in mind the “Time of Initiation”, Article 38, and the “Time of Formation”, Article 40:1, of the 2000 General Constitutions and the National Statutes, i.e. times may be extended, but not shortened. The Regional Formation Commission is recommending extended times, i.e., Orientation Phase - six months; Inquiry Phase - six months to one year; Candidacy Phase - two years. With this extended time to integrate the four pillars, the aspirant and those responsible for evaluation of the response to integrating the four pillars will determine the readiness of the aspiring inquirer or candidate to proceed in the process. “Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase” and “Reflection Questions - Candidacy Phase” will be used to assist the aspirants in determining their own readiness to proceed and to assist those responsible for evaluating this readiness. The sources for the reflection questions are the Rule and the 2000 General Constitutions. In addition two documents, “Interview - Preparation for Admission” and “Interview - Preparation for Profession”, will assist those responsible for evaluation of this readiness to proceed in the process.

Currently initial formation is relegated for the most part to the formation director or team. Ongoing formation is the domain of the council. This communicates a specific idea that formation is relegated to certain individuals. Not so! Formation is the privilege and responsibility of the entire fraternity or group. We suggest that every member of the fraternity prepare, present and facilitate Franciscan teachings for ongoing formation. Include those individuals in the Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy Phases of formation. Encourage them to share about their formation experiences. This is a time when the community and the individuals can discern if there is a calling to the Secular Franciscan way of life. The commitment to the life of the community can also be evaluated.

We suggest that the fraternities and groups place special emphasis on the beginning formation, i.e., the Orientation Phase and Inquiry Phase. We also suggest that the formation book Come and See be used for both phases AND included in ongoing formation so that all members will become knowledgeable and confident as formators.

In addition, we recommend that after receiving the “Reflection Questions - Inquiry Phase” and before the “Interview - Preparation for Admission”, the aspirant make a private retreat to reflect upon their suitability to continue formation in the Secular Franciscan Order

Practical Application:

- There is a wealth of information available for initial formation programs. Consult the Annotated Bibliography of SFO Formation Texts in this manual.
- Keep in mind that NAFRA recommends approximately one hour of ongoing formation at every monthly fraternity gathering.
- Promote variety rather than sameness, i.e., scripture, story telling, book reviews, crafts, instrumental music, singing, writing impressions of aspects of the study and small group dialogue.
- Discern and encourage the “teaching gifts” of the members.
- Include dialogue with presentations. Dialogue is preferred rather than lectures.
- Discuss TAU-USA Ongoing Formation articles.
- Plan to have the Annual Renewal of Franciscan Commitment as a special ceremony on a specific day every year - perhaps on October 3.
FRATERNITY PILLAR

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

Practical Application:

- Keep in mind that the entire fraternity is responsible for consistent and continual vibrant fraternity gatherings and fraternal life.
  - Share the technical aspects of fraternal life.
  - Offer to help. Share your gifts. Everyone has other commitments.
  - Fraternity ministers are encouraged to delegate opportunities to help.
    - Be ready and willing to accept these opportunities to help.
  - Remember to call a designated member(s) of the council if you will be absent from a fraternity gathering. To call is to care. To be excused is to respect your importance and their importance.
- Keep in mind the balance between prayer and formation, social and business.
- Emphasize prayer and formation while minimizing business.
- Conduct most of the business in the Executive Council Gatherings.
  - Present proposed plans to members for their approval and ownership of plans.
  - Discuss if and how agendas will be presented.
  - If agenda is provided, perhaps mention only selected items when reviewing the agenda.
    - Members can ask questions after reviewing the agenda.
  - Written agendas provide a connection with the fraternity for those unable to attend particular gatherings or for the excused homebound members.
  - Comprehensive minutes can also provide the connection with the fraternity.
- Keep in mind that you are members of a large family.
  - Include news and prayer requests of your regional, national and international Franciscan family at every monthly gathering.
- Keep in mind to promote and share commission activities so as to encourage each other in making a difference in the world.
- Keep in mind vocations to your fraternity.
  - Remember that every member is accountable and responsible for vocations.
  - Act upon the statement that personal contact is very important.
  - Remember that you have the opportunity to be the herald of a great leader in the Church, Francis, and to share the gift of the man and message.
  - Continue to persevere in your endeavors to increase vocations to the fraternity and the Order.
  - Consider that a vocation may originate with experiencing the Franciscan spirituality of a Secular Franciscan coupled with the invitation to “come and see.”
  - Ask, “How might I share the gift of my Secular Franciscan vocation”? Be creative.
  - Promote the SFO and fraternity in church bulletins, diocesan newspapers, etc. on a regular basis.
    - Share the happenings in your fraternal life such as rites, activities.
  - Wear your TAU or another symbol of your vocation wherever you might go.
The fraternity apostolate gives us the important opportunity to actually work together as a fraternity. When we meet together in our fraternity gatherings we get a chance to interact with each other, but the fraternity apostolate gives us the added opportunity to interact and work with each other at a different level. Our hearts are good and generous, but they need to meet together as a unit. When we choose an apostolate in which the majority of our fraternity can participate, we will come to know each other at a deeper level. When we live in relationship we learn about the other - sharing values, telling one's story, telling about our relationships and working with others. Working with another person reveals the strengths and weaknesses - whether a leader or a follower, whether insistent or compliant - in other words we learn whether we cooperate, share, truly listen, are open to change, respect the other, appreciate the person and the task. A cooperative spirit attentive to those involved and the objective of the task are the basis on which the apostolate is pursued. This pursuit is to communicate individuals working as a unit in peace and harmony - to feed, to clothe, to comfort - to make Christ present in the name of Francis. Then and only then will our vocation as Secular Franciscans be realized and the passion for our vocation become alive.

Keep in mind that our apostolic life and communal life is integrally related. As Franciscans, when we minister, we minister to and with our brothers and sisters and we minister to the larger community. It is not only “what we do” but also “how we do it.” As Franciscans our witness is dually demonstrated - how we minister together with our brothers and sisters in fraternity and how we minister to the larger community.

Practical Application:

- Pursue the challenge to bring your good and generous hearts into unity, i.e., that all may be one.
- Address the questions: Is our community sensitive to the gifts and temperaments of our members ministering to each other? Is our community sensitive to the gifts and temperaments of our members ministering to the wider community?
- Promote an apostolate, ongoing or defined for a particular time for a specified length of time, in which the majority of the fraternity can participate.
  - Within a reasonable time frame (three months) develop a written plan outlining the choice(s) of an apostolate, the frequency and duration of service, the approach/plan of action and members that will own and fulfill this apostolate.
  - During the next three months implement the plan.
  - Be accountable to each other for implementation of the plan.

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