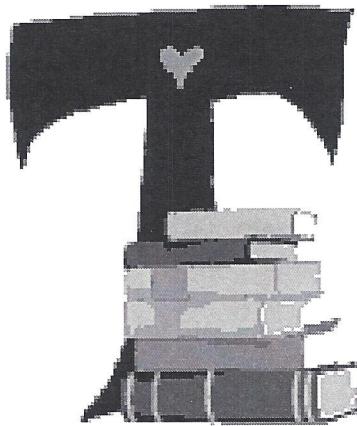


For the Formator



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For the Formator

Foundational Topics for Initial Formation

Note: The symbol [C] denotes a section adapted from the original CIOFS materials

First Contacts

- What is Formation? [C]

Orientation

Additional reading: The Profession of Faith from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC). If additional catechesis is needed, beyond a basic doctrinal review, then the individuals should be referred to an RCIA or other parish based catechetical program.

- Basic Catholic Doctrine [C]
- Ecclesiology and Theology of the Laity [C]
- Introduction to the Franciscan Family [C]

Inquiry

Additional reading: A biography of St. Francis of Assisi

- Vocation [C]
- Identity of the Secular Franciscan [C]
- Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order [C]
- Charism and Mission [C]
- Franciscan Movement 1 - Life of St Francis of Assisi
- Franciscan Movement II – Your Own journey

Candidacy

- Conversion & Penitence [C]
- Rule of The SFO (3-sessions)
- JPIC & Catholic Social Teaching (2 sessions)
- Francis and His Approach to Divinity (2 sessions) [C]
- Profession (2-sessions) [C]
 - Profession is designed to be presented mid-way through Candidacy
- Fraternity [C]
- Franciscan Theology, Spirituality and Tradition
- Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mary
- Clare of Assisi
- General Constitutions and National Statutes
 - Annotated Study Edition of each document available on FUN CD and on the NFC Website
- History of the SFO and its Rules [C]

Additional reading: Franciscan Saints of all three orders.

For Up to Now & Guidelines for Initial Formation 1985

What is the relationship of *For Up to Now* to the *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States 1985*?

To understand this relationship let's look at a little history. In 1983 CIOFS issued a document entitled "Working Materials for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order". In 1985 the National Formation Commission in the USA adapted this material and published it as *Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States, 1985*. (GFIF). In 2002 CIOFS began work on a new formation project. This formation project, *Forming the Formators* was completed by CIOFS in 2008, and contains the foundational topics to be used in formation. *For Up to Now* is the version of that CIOFS manual which has been adapted, expanded and approved for use by all Secular Franciscan fraternities in the United States. Again, this is the work of the National Formation Commission in the USA.

As you can see, GFIF and *For Up to Now* both trace their roots to directives given us by CIOFS.

GFIF is not “out-dated” in any way and *For Up to Now* does not replace GFIF. Actually, one builds on the other. The material in GFIF is vital and is the foundation on which *For Up to Now* is built. The implementation of *For Up to Now* (FUN) is not complete without the implied, underlying content of GFIF. This is evident by the numerous references to GFIF in FUN.

Formators on every level of fraternity should be thoroughly familiar with and utilize both of these publications.

Initial formation will suffer without both of these resources.

Formation Content Comparison

Comparison of the content specified in the Guidelines for Initial Formation, 1985 & the Core Topics of the *For Up to Now* Project. The symbol [C] denotes materials adapted from the CIOFS manual (*Forming the Formators*).

Guidelines for Initial Formation

Approved October 1985

Ref: pp 25-35, 39

Orientation

Determine basic disposition to Franciscan Charism & life in fraternity

Content:

- Overview of life of Francis
- Branches of Franciscan Family
- The SFO
- Phases of Formation & expectations
- Review Catholic Doctrine

Inquiry

1st Phase of Initial Formation begins more in-depth process of identifying and discerning vocation

Content:

- The Church & Vatican 2
- Lay Spirituality
- Life of St Francis
- History of the SFO
- Structure of the SFO
- *Ritual of the SFO*

For Up to Now

Core Topics

First Contact pre-orientation

- **What is formation [C]** explanation of the formation process

Orientation

Determine basic understanding of the primary doctrines of the Catholic Church and the basic disposition to Franciscan Charism & life in fraternity

Content:

- **Basic Catholic Doctrine [C]**
 - The Creed (assigned extra reading) [C]
- **Ecclesiology of the Laity [C]**
- **Introduction to the Franciscan Family [C]**

Inquiry

Required additional reading: A Biography of St Francis of Assisi

Content:

- **Vocation [C]**
- **Charism & Mission [C]**
- **Identity of a Secular Franciscan**
- **Nature of the SFO [C]**
- **Franciscan Movement 1 - Life of Francis of Assisi**
- **Franciscan Movement II - Your Own Journey**

<p>Candidacy</p> <p>Preparation to embrace vocation and make permanent Profession (consecrated life)</p> <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pauline Rule & Prologue • Sacred Scripture • Franciscan Spirituality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trinitarian & Christocentric • Franciscan Apostolic Life • <i>Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order</i> – US English version recommended. 	<p>Candidacy</p> <p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rule of the SFO (3 sessions) • JPIC (2 sessions) • Conversion – penitence [C] • Francis and His Approach to Divinity (2 sessions) [C] <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Primacy of the Father – Christology • Profession (2 sessions) [C] • Franciscan Tradition & Spirituality <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Trinity (Bonaventure) – Primacy of Christ (Scotus) • Fraternity [C] • Francis & Blessed Virgin Mary • Clare of Assisi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gaze, consider, contemplate and Imitate • History of the SFO [C] • General Constitutions & National Statutes (study guides) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Available on the <i>For Up to Now</i> CD or online at the NFC webpage: www.nafraformation.org <p>Note: <i>The Ritual of the SFO</i> is a good source to develop prayer for use in your formation activities along with prayer specifically developed for the individual formation topic/session.</p> <p>[C] denotes CIOFS topic or adaptation</p>
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First of all, congratulations on your election or appointment as a formation director! You have said yes to undertake one of the most vital functions within our Order, that of helping our sisters and brothers of the Secular Franciscan Order come to a deeper understand of our vocation as we seek to observe the Gospel of our Lord, Jesus Christ after the manner and inspiration of St. Francis.

You are in the hearts and prayers of all of us, so we all might do what is ours to do and become the generous and joyful servant of all.

Next, what will you need in conjunction with this manual?

The *Handbook for Regional Formation Directors* which is available on the National Formation website might be your first guide. This handbook, applicable to formators at both local and the regional fraternities, gives your “job description”, lists your responsibilities, which are many, and suggests ways for you to accomplish them.

It also advises you that you are not alone. It describes your relationship with the National Formation Commission and your very important relationship with your Regional Council and Spiritual Assistant. These relationships are vital to you and vital to the success of formation in the Order. This handbook also suggests how to develop a Formation Team.

As you can see the work of formation in the Secular Franciscan Order is the work of all of the Agents of Formation.

- ❖ The Holy Spirit
- ❖ The person to be formed
- ❖ The Fraternity
- ❖ The Council and the Minister
- ❖ The Formator
- ❖ The Spiritual Assistant

This is not, and should not be, your task alone.

(A complete description of the Agents of Formation can be found in the *Guidelines for Initial Formation, National Formation Commission 1985.*)

On page two of the *Handbook for Regional Formation Directors*, is a list of needed resources which should be given to every formation director.

That list is as follows:

1. *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* *
2. *The General Constitutions of the SFO* *
3. *The National Statutes of the National Fraternity of the SFO in the USA* *
4. *The Ritual of the SFO – USA version*¹
5. *Guidelines for Initial Formation*, National Formation Commission 1985²
6. *Elements of Initial Formation*, CIOFS, Rome 1992³
7. *For Up to Now* Manual and the associated *For Up to Now* CD
8. *SFO Formation Resource Manual* *
9. *Handbook for Regional Formation Directors* *
10. Regional Guidelines (Each region should have these in place)
11. Regional Directory (This directory would contain the names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of the council members of each fraternity, including the local fraternity Director of Formation and Spiritual Assistant)
12. Regional Formation Manual (Please refer to page 7 of the *Handbook for Regional Formation Directors* for description)

* These can be found on the National Formation Commission website.

www.nafraformation.org/

In addition to the above here are some additional resources:

1. A good list of folks in the fraternity who can assist in presentations and/or sponsoring individuals.
2. A good working collaboration with your local Spiritual Assistant – this person is your partner in the formation process and also needs to be present during the initial formation process.
3. A personal desire to keep current with the latest Franciscan scholarship and a willingness to share it with all your sisters and brothers.

¹ Available at Smoky Valley Printing Box 189, Lindsborg, KS 67456 - lindabce@kans.com or see order form in the TAU-USA

² *ibid*

³ *ibid*

4. The desire to help other understand and discern if they have a true vocation. Your Spiritual Assistant is a tremendous help here.
5. A personal commitment. A commitment to prayer and the tending of your own vocation is primary. A commitment to take the time to do the work of the Order follows. This work does take time. The time you give is certainly sacrificial, a gift to the Order, and a blessing for us all.
6. A prayerful and joyful spirit which is the hallmark of a Franciscan.

So here is a suggestion, armed with all of the above, and possibly some small feeling of being overwhelmed (don't worry its normal), get familiar with all things Franciscan. Read "References to Formation in the Essential Documents"⁴. Take a good look at the diagram, "Pathway to Profession" and thoroughly understand the process of Initial Formation.

Read thoroughly this first selection titled "What is Formation" by Anne Mulqueen, SFO for a good in depth understand of the process, it will really help you in being able to explain what is in store to those seeking to grasp the nature of the lifelong journey they are thinking of entering.

It is very important for you to understand that while you are the council's agent for formation, this is an endeavor that needs the cooperation of the whole council and also every professed member of the fraternity.

Formation is vital to the Order and vital for all the Sisters and Brothers in it, so each one of us must assist in helping those in formation to develop the right understanding to be able to embrace Franciscan values and the Franciscan charism.

Enjoy with peace and every blessing

Robert L. Fitzsimmons, SFO

On behalf of The National Formation Commission 2011

⁴ Available on the *For Up to Now* CD

Pathway to Profession

An Explanation of the Journey of Initial Formation

Introduction

“Pathway to Profession” is a diagram and outline of the structure of the formation process. Compare this “structure” to the bones in the body. The bones are something on which to build. But a body is not just a skeleton and - for the sake of our analogy - a body needs not only the skeleton, but the muscle, a circulatory and nervous system, and the very breath of life!

- The “skeleton” is “Pathway to Profession” – the basic structure of Formation.
- The “muscle” is found in *For Up to Now* – the required knowledge⁵.
- The “circulatory and nervous system” is the all of the work of Formation - by the Candidate, the Formator, the Minister and the Council, the Spiritual Assistant and the Fraternity, all assisted by the Holy Spirit.
- The “very breath of life” is truly God’s grace!

“Pathway to Profession” gives you the structure. It is your work to flesh it out. So take this structure and build on it. Take the time to study the “Pathway to Profession” diagram and read through the description of each step along the path. Become familiar with the process, the goals, and the spirit of formation in our Order.

A formation program needs to have a balance of learned fact and lived experience. It needs to provide a solid foundation to fall back on when feelings fade. Yet facts alone will get us nowhere. There needs to be an experience of God – and that experience needs to be supported, nurtured and celebrated within fraternity!

The formation program should be well planned – yet flexible and sensitive to the needs of each individual candidate. Remember we are forming these prospective members for a lifetime commitment. Formation should be slow and careful - never rushed. This is a Vocation. Those who have the call and the sincere desire to become members of the SFO

⁵ The Foundational Topics that are to be used within the formation process are described in the *For Up to Now* manual and are based on the desire of the XII General Chapter of the SFO, 2008, as expressed to us by CIOFS in their 2008 *Forming the Formators* manual. These materials were, by permission of CIOFS, adapted and expanded for formation in the Secular Franciscan Order of the United States by the National Formation Commission and provide topics as described in the *Guidelines for Initial Formation, 1985*.

will be patient. They will appreciate the great care and concern we give to the formation process.

To share with others the joy of the Secular Franciscan way of life is a rewarding and important responsibility. It is something we do together as brothers and sisters – learning from each other as we go along, using the gifts, talents and resources that God has given us.

Remembering the inspiration that first led us to follow Christ in the way of Francis, we can be confident that God will continue to fill us with every grace necessary for this task.

The “Pathway to Profession” diagram can be found on the following page.

The explanation of each step along the way follows the diagram.

Jan Parker, SFO

March 2, 2011

Feast of St. Agnes of Prague

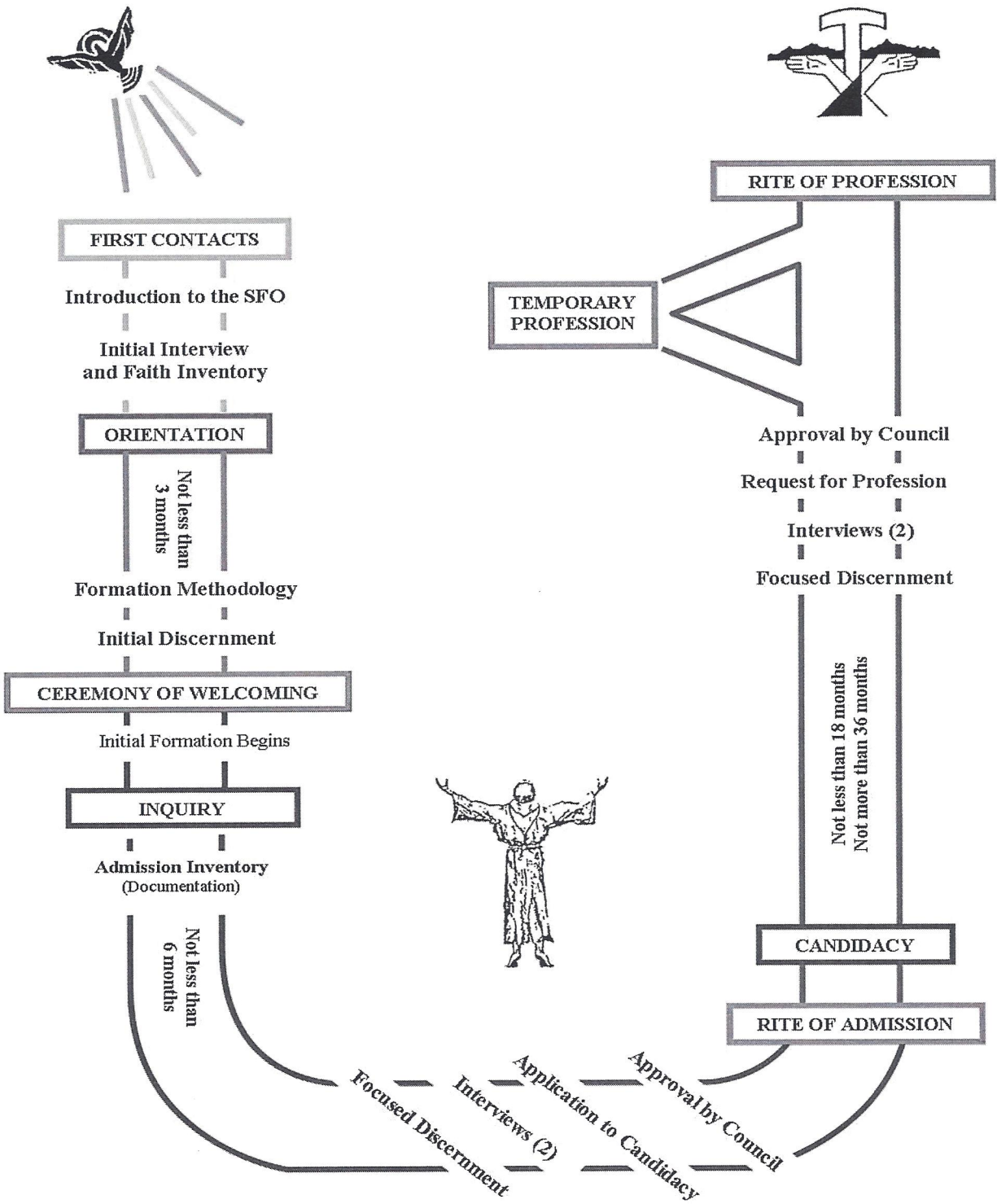
“Then he returned to the friars once again and told them, ‘Have courage, my dearly beloved, and rejoice in God. There is no need to be upset because there are only a few of us, nor any need to be afraid because we have no experience.’”

Words of St. Francis from Bonaventure, Major Life

First Contacts

By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, by the life and witness of Secular Franciscans, and by promotion of the Order people are drawn to explore a possible vocation to the SFO. Extend a warm welcome to all who are interested. Meet with them individually or invite them to an open house type gathering in order to present to them an Introduction to the SFO. Refer to *Guidelines for Initial Formation* (GFIF) page 25, “First Contacts”.

PATHWAY TO PROFESSION



Introduction to the SFO

In a one-on-one meeting or at an Open House:

- Welcome & Introductions
- Opening Prayer: “Praises of God” or “The Praises to be said at All the Hours” (*Ritual of the SFO*, page 99)
- Scripture reflection. (John 1:38-51) Like Francis and Clare we are attracted to a person, the person of Jesus.
- An overview of the Franciscan Family (GFIF, page 23)
- Sharing of personal testimonies prepared by professed members of the SFO:
 - Who are Francis and Clare to me?
 - What does it mean to be a Secular Franciscan and how has it changed my life?
 - Explanation and real life examples of “Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel”.
 - What does the Rule mean to me?
 - What does “Fraternity” mean to me?
- Brief explanation of Formation
 - Formation seeks to nurture the personal relationship one has with Christ.
 - Franciscan formation seeks to facilitate growth in that relationship with an ongoing awareness of how persons share in the charism of Francis and Clare, so that the life of a Secular Franciscan in today’s world might conform more and more to the example of the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Overview of the formation process
 - Show Pathway to Profession diagram
- Period of Question and Answers
- Closing Prayer: The Prayer before the Crucifix⁶ or other prayer of St. Francis.
- Take home reading materials:
 - Provide a copy of the Rule of the SFO⁷, or *From Gospel to Life - The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order with Commentary*⁸ by Benet Fonck, OFM or an overview of the Rule⁹.
 - From the Digests¹⁰: Francis of Assisi, Clare of Assisi, Prayer, Franciscan Image of Jesus
 - *The Journey and the Dream* by Murray Bodo, OFM

⁶ Ritual of the SFO, page 100

⁷ Available on *For Up to Now* CD or as download from www.nafrformation.org

⁸ Franciscan Resources http://franciscanresources.com/store/category/9akd/FORMATION_PROGRAMS.html

⁹ See *FOR UP TO NOW* CD “Overview of the Rule” and Overview of the Way of Life”

¹⁰ Available at Smoky Valley Printing, see order form in the TAU-USA

Initial Interview

- “Each person comes to the Fraternity carrying his/her own special gift. Therefore, this is a golden opportunity to ask some questions about the person, his/her style of being a brother or sister, and his/her evangelical and apostolic life, and to initiate some inner renewal”. (GFIF, pg. 25).
- An initial interview takes place in the context of a conversation. Information should be recorded. See “Guidelines for Interviews¹¹” and “Interview Guide for Prospective Members”¹²
- The formator should review the requirements listed in Article 19 of the National Statutes to insure that the prospective member is qualified.

NOTE: It is recommended that all information forms, sacrament records, interview observations, correspondence, letters of recommendations and other notes be kept in a confidential file folder for each prospective member. This will help the Fraternity Council in their discernment process.

Faith Inventory

- A faith inventory or assessment is made. The prospective member must be a fully initiated Catholic, having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation and in good standing in the Church¹³.
- Discern the necessity of a review of Catholic teachings in light of Vatican II Christology and ecclesiology. Is there a good understanding and a committed practice of the Catholic faith? A good mix of apostolic activity and prayer life?

Orientation

- Following an initial interview and faith inventory a prospective member begins Orientation.
- Orientation is a time for determining a person’s interest, eligibility and disposition to enter into the initial formation process.
- The time spent in Orientation should be sufficient to adequately cover the foundational topics outlined in *For Up to Now* and not less than 3 months¹⁴.

¹¹ See *For Up to Now* CD

¹² SFO Resource Manual pp. 79-81 and “Signs a person may or may not have a vocation” pp. 77 and 78

¹³ *NAFRA National Statutes 2005 Article 19:2.d*

¹⁴ *NAFRA National Statutes 2005 Article 19:1.b*

- The topics for this phase of formation is given in *For Up to Now* see chart on page 6 of this section and refer to the GFIF, pages 25-26.
- Additional information and support material for Orientation can be found in the SFO Resource Manual¹⁵.

Formation Methodology

- As Orientation comes to a close the prospective member should be given a thorough explanation of formation and the overall formation process.
 - Formation seeks to nurture the personal relationship one has with Christ. Franciscan formation seeks to facilitate growth in that relationship with an ongoing awareness of how persons share in the charism of Francis and Clare, so that the life of a Franciscan in today's world might conform more and more to the example of the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ.
 - Formation helps the Inquirer and the Candidate to acquire the knowledge and experience to interiorize the Secular Franciscan gospel life.
 - The end of formation is conversion, not just knowledge – the goal being personal union with the Lord Jesus in the tradition and spirituality of the Franciscan family.
- Familiarize him/her with the “Pathway to Profession” diagram and each of the requirements along the “path”. The prospective member needs to be aware that although these are phases over a period of time, formation is a single process of daily ongoing conversion which continues beyond Profession – the commitment to the SFO is lived one day at a time for the rest of our lives.
- There should be an understanding on the part of the prospective member of what is expected of him/her during this time¹⁶.
- Those entering formation need to be freely able and ready to make the necessary commitment.
- Regions might develop an information sheet (Formation Policy Handout) to be given to prospective members outlining the formation policies of the SFO.

¹⁵ See *For Up to Now* CD or NFC website www.nafrformation.org

¹⁶ Refer to GFIF, pages 17-18: Agents of Formation / The Candidate

Initial Discernment

- Taking into account the faith inventory, the formator should review the requirements listed in Article 19 of the National Statutes to insure that the prospective member is qualified.
- Formators should refer to “Signs of presence of vocation to the SFO” in the Resource Manual¹⁷.
- The prospective members is also guided in their own discernment at this time. Questions include: Who is Francis in my life? What is my attraction to the SFO?
- If there is a potential problem with a prospective member it should be handled immediately, tactfully and with great charity.

Ceremony of Welcoming

- At the beginning of the time of Inquiry the newcomer is introduced and welcomed into the fraternity. This ceremony takes place following the directives in the *Ritual*, found in both the Preface, page 4, and within the ceremony, page 9.
- The "life of Francis" that is presented during the ceremony of welcoming might be the biography that they will read as part of the Inquiry phase of formation. (See "Franciscan Movement One: The Journey of Francis" for details.)
- The Ceremony of Welcoming is a natural time to formalize a relationship between the newcomer and a sponsor. The document “Sponsors in the Formation Process” from the Resource Manual¹⁸, provides guidelines for this relationship.
- After the Ceremony of Welcoming the period of Initial Formation begins.

Inquiry

- Inquiry is the first phase of initial formation – a time of seeking and choosing.
- Content for this phase of formation as outlined in *For Up to Now* and the GFIF, see chart pages 6-7 of this section.

¹⁷ SFO Resource Manual pp 77-78

¹⁸ SFO Resource Manual pp 38-40

- The purpose of Inquiry and the guidelines for this phase can be found in GFIF (page 26)
- Additional information and support material for Inquiry can be found in the SFO Resource Manual¹⁹.
- The time spent in Inquiry should be sufficient to adequately cover the foundational topics listed in *For Up to Now* and not less than 6 months²⁰, but this time can be extended if needed to facilitate building stronger relationships, experience and understanding.
- The Inquirer begins to participate fully in the life of the Fraternity, building relationships with the brothers and sisters and becoming familiar with the Franciscan way of life.
- The members of the Council should make a special effort to come to know Inquirers.
- An important dimension of this phase of formation is for the Inquirer to devote time to personal prayer, Scripture, reading a biography of St. Francis and becoming familiar with the prayers and writings of Francis and Clare, and listening to the call of the Holy Spirit.
- At certain times during Inquiry one-on-one conversations between the Formator and/or Spiritual Assistant and the Inquirer provide opportunities to discuss progress, address concerns, answer questions and provide support and encouragement.
- Gatherings with Inquirers from other local fraternities for prayer, formation and fellowship are highly encouraged.

Admission Inventory

The following documents must be on file prior to the Rite of Admission and should be obtained early in the Inquiry Phase:

- Baptism Certificate, annotated with other sacrament dates²¹.
- If married provide verification of validity.
 - Decree of Nullity, if applicable.

¹⁹ See *For Up to Now* CD or NFC website www.nafraformation.org

²⁰ *NAFRA Statutes, 2005 Article 19: 2.a*

²¹ *NAFRA Statutes, 2005 Article 19: 2.d*

- If ordained, provide copy of letter verifying faculties.
- Two letters of recommendation, one being from the Inquirer's pastor.

Focused Discernment

Discernment is ongoing throughout the time of initial formation but as the Inquirer nears the time for the Rite of Admission it becomes more focused.

- The Inquirer is highly encouraged to:
 - attend a Day of Recollection or Retreat
 - spend time in prayer
 - speak with the Spiritual Assistant and other members of the fraternity for spiritual direction to aid in their discernment.
- The Inquirer considers these basic questions in order to make a choice:
 - "What is a vocation and how am I called? What is the 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?²²"
 - The normative elements that should be clearly and evidently highlighted for the candidate are the following:
 - The request and the will to experience the Gospel life, like Francis of Assisi;
 - having in mind that the request is related to a possible future commitment to live this way of life, with the help of a fraternity, in communion and harmony with the whole Franciscan family²³."

Interviews

- The purpose of interviews at the end of the Inquiry Phase is to:
 - Ascertain if the Inquirer wishes to continue on to Candidacy.
 - Answer any specific questions the Inquirer may have.
 - To provide encouragement and support.
 - To ascertain readiness for the Rite of Admission.

²² GFIF page 26

²³ Ritual pg 4, #3.22

- Two interviews are scheduled with the Inquirer – one conducted by the Spiritual Assistant and one by another member of the council. These interviews could be combined in the form of a roundtable discussion with the Spiritual Assistant and several council members present.
- Refer to the SFO Resource Manual for these documents:
 - Guidelines to Interviews
 - See Inquiry/Candidacy Interview Form

Application to Candidacy

- An application to Candidacy is made by the Inquirer to the Minister of the local fraternity by a formal act, in writing if possible.
- The Candidate should be encouraged to write out their thoughts about the Secular Franciscan way of life and the possibility of a commitment to this way of life. This need not be long but should be a good evaluation of how they feel called.
- Along with a personal written reflection, there is wisdom in asking the Candidate to sign an official request with the following information:
 - I have come to see in the Secular Franciscan Order a way of life that appeals to me.
 - I would like to continue studying this way and learn more about it.
 - Therefore, I request to be received as a Candidate, to experience this way of life more intensely, and prepare for a future life commitment in the SFO.
 - I understand that my request for admission is subject to the approval of the Fraternity Council.
 - I realize that I may withdraw at any time prior to Profession.

Approval by Council

The Council, having come to know the Inquirer, has a serious responsibility to prayerfully and thoroughly consider whether the applicant is called to become a member of the Secular Franciscan Order. The importance of determining this information early in the formation process cannot be over emphasized for the good of the person and the good of the Fraternity.

1. The Fraternity Council reviews the Rule, General Constitutions and National Statutes, (see “References to Formation in the Essential Documents²⁴”) to insure that a prospective member meets all requirements. Everything that is necessary up to this point in the formation process must be completed and up-to-date before admission to the Order.
 2. Requirements for membership are not just freedom from impediments. Certain positive indications of a vocation to the SFO are required. It is critical that the Council review these “Requirements for Membership” listed in GFIF, page 17-18, #2.
 3. There must be a willingness and an ability on the part of the prospective member. It is critical to review the “expectations upon the candidate” page 18, #3 of GFIF.
 4. To discern if a prospective member has the basic dispositions that are *essential* for entering into this mature committed relationship it is critical that the Council review the excellent questions, referred to as “screening norms”, to be used in this discernment process as listed in GFIF, page 25.
 5. The Council may also refer to “Signs of presence of vocation to the SFO” in the SFO Resource Manual²⁵.
- After prayer and discussion the Fraternity Council decides collegially on the request, gives a formal answer to the Inquirer, and communicates this to the fraternity.
 - If there is a potential problem with a prospective member it should be handled immediately, tactfully and with great charity.

Rite of Admission

- The Rite of Admission is not scheduled until after the Council approves the Inquirer(s) for Admission. Adequate planning is needed to insure this Rite can be celebrated appropriately.
- The Rite of Admission takes place following the directives in the *Ritual*, found in both the Preface, page 4, and within the ceremony, page 11.

²⁴ See *For Up to Now* CD

²⁵ SFO Resource Manual pages 77-78

- Immediately after the Rite of Admission the act is to be registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.
- After the Rite of Admission Candidacy begins.

Candidacy

- Candidacy is the period of interiorizing and integration of the Gospel life to prepare the Candidate for a lifetime commitment to live the Rule of the SFO.
- The purpose of Candidacy and guidelines for this phase can be found in the General Constitutions (Article 40), GFIF (page 26), and in the *Ritual*.
- Content for this phase of formation is given in *For Up to Now* see list on page 4 or chart on page 7 of this section.
- The time spent in Candidacy should be sufficient to adequately cover the foundational material in *For Up to Now*. Candidacy is not less than 18 months, but not more than 36 months²⁶.
- Candidates are fully integrated into the life of the Fraternity in all aspects except those areas reserved for professed members.
- Candidates continue to devote time to prayer, Scripture, the prayers and writings of Francis and Clare, and listening to the call of the Holy Spirit.
- Knowledge of the Rule is essential and is attained equally by study, reflection and lived experience with a special focus on daily conversion. As Candidates begin to understand and live the Rule, embracing it as their own in their secular lives, it will ignite the Franciscan Charism within them and they will pursue it as the ideal by which they can attain to holiness.
- Called to go from Gospel to Life and Life to Gospel, those in Candidacy are guided to the regular practice of reading and meditating on the Word of God so they, like Francis and Clare, might hear and live it.
- At certain times during Candidacy one-on-one conversations between the Formator and/or the Spiritual Assistant and the Candidate provide opportunities to discuss progress, address concerns, answer questions and provide support and encouragement.
- Gatherings with Candidates from other local fraternities for prayer, formation and fellowship are highly encouraged.

²⁶ *NAFRA Statutes, 2005 Article 19: 2.b*

Focused Discernment

Discernment is ongoing throughout the time of initial formation but as the Candidate nears the time for Profession it becomes more focused.

- The Candidate is highly encouraged to:
 - participate with the fraternity on a Day of Recollection or Retreat
 - spend time in prayer and Scripture reflection
 - speak with the Spiritual Assistant and other members of the fraternity for spiritual direction to aid in their discernment.
 - Prayerfully review the Rule of the SFO, as profession is a permanent commitment.
 - Prayerful reading from the Preface of the *Ritual* 3.3 on the Rite of Profession.

- The Candidate should consider questions such as: Is there a desire to make a lifetime commitment to live as a Secular Franciscan? Where is the desire rooted? Where did it come from? How has it manifested itself? What is the evidence of that commitment?

Interviews

- Towards the end of Candidacy two interviews are scheduled with the Candidate – one conducted by the Spiritual Assistant and one by another member of the council. These interviews could be combined in the form of a roundtable discussion with the Spiritual Assistant and several council members present.

- The purpose of interviews at the end of Candidacy is to:
 - Ascertain how the Candidate has progressed.
 - Answer any specific questions the Candidate may have.
 - To provide encouragement and support.
 - To discuss openly and honestly the Candidate's decision to become professed or not to be professed.
 - To ascertain readiness for Permanent Commitment (Profession) in the Secular Franciscan Order.
 - To impress upon the Candidate the seriousness of Permanent Commitment (Profession) in the Secular Franciscan Order.
 - To assure the Council that the Candidate's decision to become professed is based upon sound judgment and spiritual motivation.

Request for Profession

- After a time of focused discernment including prayer, reflection and self-evaluation, the Candidate may choose to request profession into the Secular Franciscan Order. This request must be made in writing or by direct communication with the fraternity minister.
- The Candidate should be encouraged to write a personal “statement of profession”, as part of their request, describing their thoughts and feelings at this time of commitment. This statement is optional but helps the candidate to crystalize their own vocation. This statement could be read during the Rite of Profession to the assembled community as part of the official request for Profession within the Rite (prior to the Homily and Questioning).

Approval by Council

The Council has a serious responsibility to prayerfully and thoroughly consider whether the applicant is called to permanently profess as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order.

1. The Fraternity Council reviews the Rule, General Constitutions and National Statutes (see “References to Formation in the Essential Documents²⁷”) and reads from the Preface to the *Ritual* 3.3 as regards Profession.
2. Although thorough discernment at the time of admission to the order has taken place it is helpful for the Council members to reevaluate signs of readiness:
 - Positive indications of a vocation to the SFO are required. Review “Requirements for Membership”. (GFIF, page 17-18, #2)
 - Basic dispositions that are essential - review the questions, referred to as “screening norms”. (GFIF, page 25)
 - The Council may also refer to “Signs of presence of vocation to the SFO” in the SFO Resource Manual²⁸.
3. The choices before the Council at this time are
 - Recommend Profession
 - Recommend delay of Profession
 - Temporary Profession
 - Denial of Profession

²⁷ See *For Up to Now* CD

²⁸ SFO Resource Manual pages 77-78

4. After prayer and discussion the Fraternity Council decides by secret ballot on the admission to profession, gives its reply to the candidate, and informs the fraternity.

The Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment

- The Rite of Profession is not scheduled until after the Council approves the Candidate(s) for Profession.
- Adequate planning is needed to insure this Rite can be celebrated appropriately and properly witnessed by the Church.
- The Rite of Profession takes place following the directives in the *Ritual of the SFO*, found in both the Preface 3.3, page 5, and within the ceremony, page 18.
It is important that both the preface and the ceremony are reviewed.
- For specific liturgical suggestions please refer to the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*, English Version, approved by the Sacred Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship, August 5, 1985, and by the Franciscan Friars Conference of the USA (OFM, OFM Cap., OFM Conv. And TOR)
- Because Profession (permanent commitment²⁹) is an act of personal consecration, both public and ecclesial, the preferred celebration takes place in the context of the Mass and celebration of the Eucharist.
- It is also permissible though not preferred to celebrate Profession within the context of the Liturgy of the Word, if it is impossible to celebrate mass and the Eucharist.
- Immediately after the Rite of Profession the act is to be registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.

The Rite of Temporary Commitment

1. This Rite generally takes place in a fraternity setting and is not done in conjunction with the celebration of the Eucharist. There can however; be a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.³⁰

²⁹ See *Ritual of the SFO*, English edition 1985, Preface 3.3 and 3.31, also Chapter 3

³⁰ See *Ritual of the SFO*, English edition 1985, Preface 3.4 and 3.43, also Chapter 4

