
Importance of Formation

The journey of formation, which should develop throughout life, begins with entrance into the fraternity. Mindful that **the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation** and always attentive to collaboration with Him, **those responsible for formation are: the candidate, the entire fraternity, the council with the minister, the master of formation, and the assistant.** ¹

The entire community is engaged in the process of growth by its own manner of living. ²

The candidates are guided to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, **to come to know the person and writings of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality, and to study the Rule and Constitutions.** They are trained in a love for the Church and acceptance of her teaching. The laity practice living their secular commitment in the world in an evangelical way.³

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.** ⁴

“The importance of formation has emerged as the essential element to guarantee an authentic and deep sense of belonging, rooted in a clear notion of identity and knowledge of the true nature of the OFS and of its place in the Franciscan Family and in the Church.” ⁵

For Further Discussion

1. Why is formation essential in the life of a Secular Franciscan? In the life of the Fraternity?

¹ OFS Constitution, 37:2

² Rule 23

³ OFS Constitution, 40:2

⁴ OFS Constitution, 44:1

⁵ General Chapter 2002, Concluding Remarks

Role of the Formation Director

The master of formation has the following duties:⁶

- to **co-ordinate**, with the help of the other members of the council, the formative activities of the fraternity
- to **instruct and enliven** the inquirers during the time of initiation, the candidates during the period of initiation formation, and the newly professed
- to **inform the council** of the fraternity prior to profession, **concerning the suitability of the candidate for a commitment to live according to the Rule.**

Role of the Spiritual Assistant

The principal task of the assistant is to **communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters.**⁷

The spiritual and pastoral care of the SFO, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the duty, above all, of their general and provincial ministers. The *altius moderamen*, of which Canon 303 speaks, belongs to them. The purpose of the *altius moderamen* is to **guarantee the fidelity of the SFO to the Franciscan charism**, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.⁸

By virtue of the vital reciprocity between the religious and the secular members of the Franciscan Family and in regard to the responsibilities of major superiors, **spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the SFO at all levels must be assured as a fundamental element of communion.**⁹

⁶ OFS Constitution, 52:3

⁷ OFS Constitution, 90:1

⁸ OFS Constitution, 85:2

⁹ OFS Constitution, 89:1

The Formation Team¹⁰

Definition of Formation Team

- **two or more persons who work together on common formation goals**
- **who understand they must work in harmony to accomplish these goals**

Ground Rules for Interacting as a Team

- A high level of **interdependence** exists
- **Trust and mutual-respect** is present
- Team members have **good people skills** and are **committed to the team approach**
- They civilly and **respectfully suggest correction and accept correction**
- They are **willing to see a different perspective** and better yet, **seek out other's perspectives**
- They are **willing to take risks and dream big**

For Further Discussion

1. How well does my Fraternity's Formation Team work together as a team?
2. How can I, as part of my Fraternity's Formation Team, instruct and enliven my Fraternity?
3. What does Formation 'look like' in my Fraternity?

¹⁰ Handbook for Region Formators, pp 10,11

Resources for Initial Formation

1. *Francis of Assisi: The Song Goes On* by Fr Hugh Nonan, OFM and Fr Roy M. Gasnick, OFM
2. *Seeking the Gospel Life* by Fr Lester Bach, OFM Cap
3. *Clare of Assisi: The Letters to Agnes* by Sr Joan Mueller, OSF
4. *Francis, The Journey and the Dream* by Fr Murray Bodo, OFM
5. *Catholic Study Bible: Revised Standard Version or Jerusalem Bible*
6. *Come and See* by Theresa Baker, OFS
7. *The Franciscan Journey* by Fr Lester Bach, OFM Cap
8. *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* by Pope Francis
9. *From Gospel to Life: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* by Fr Benet Fonck, OFM
10. *To Cling With All Her Heart to Him: The Spirituality of Clare of Assisi* by Fr Benet Fonck, OFM
11. *The Franciscan Journey* by Fr Lester Bach, OFM Cap

For Further Discussion

1. What resources has my fraternity used for Initial Formation?
2. How well did the resources meet the needs of those in all phases of Initial Formation (i.e. Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy)?

Resources for Ongoing Formation

1. *To Live as Francis Lived* by Fr Leonard Foley, OFM
2. *Pick More Daisies* by Fr Lester Bach, OFM Cap
3. *Rule of the SFO: Origins, Development, Interpretation* by Fr Robert Stewart, OFM
4. *I Believe: Living the US Catholic Catechism for Adults* (DVD) USCCB
5. *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*, USCCB
6. *Called to Build a More Fraternal and Evangelical World: A Concordance of the SFO Rule* by Benet A. Fonck, OFM
7. *A Poor Man's Legacy, An Anthology of Franciscan Poverty* by Cyprian J. Lynch, OFM
8. *Following Francis of Assisi, A Spirituality for Daily Living* by Patti Normille, OSF
9. *The Greatest of These is Love, The Life of St. Elizabeth of Hungary* by Lori Piper, OFS
10. *Poverty and Joy, The Franciscan Tradition* by William J Short, OFM
11. *Pope Francis, In His Own Words* edited by Julie Schwieter Collazo and Lisa Rogak
12. *Tau-USA National Newsletter* by NAFRA
13. *The Troubadour and eTroubadour Newsletters* by Our Lady of the Angels Region
14. *St. Francis of Assisi Omnibus of Sources Volumes I and II*, edited by Marion A. Habig
15. *Franciscan Prayer* by Ilia Delio, OSF
16. *Dating God* by Daniel Horan, OFM
17. *Build with Living Stones* edited by Sr. Daria Mitchell
18. *The Franciscan Vision and the Gospel of John* by Michael D. Guinean, OFM
19. *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, with Catechism and Instructions* published by Franciscan Press
20. Vatican II documents

For Further Discussion

1. What resources has my fraternity used for Ongoing Formation?
2. How well did the resources meet the needs of my fraternity? What worked well? What needed improvement?

Resources for Formation Directors¹¹

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
5. Guidelines for Initial Formation, National Formation Commission
6. Elements of Initial Formation, CIOFS, Rome
7. For Up to Now Manual and the associated For Up to Now CD

¹¹ Fun Manual, page 9

The FUN Manual

Objectives of the FUN Manual

- **to develop a more uniform formation process** across the USA
- **to define essential elements** of this formation, concretely
- to provide our formators with easy to read and use materials that includes texts suitable for those in formation along with teaching aides, lesson plans, objectives, prayer actions, etc **to make facilitating the local and regional formation process easier and more user friendly.**
- Lastly **to increase our own understanding of who we are called to be** as Franciscans, enhance our sense of belonging and ownership of our Order and to pass this Franciscan spirit on to others who respond to this same vocation.

For Further Discussion

1. How has my fraternity used the FUN manual in Initial Formation? Ongoing Formation?

Audio Resources for Formation

Chant

- Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles - "Advent at Ephesus", "Easter at Ephesus", "Lent at Ephesus"
- Beth Nielsen Chapman - "Hymns"
- Josef Raischl, OFS and André Cirino, OFM - "Love Holding Love - St. Clare", "Love Holding Love - St. Francis"
- Hildegard Von Bingen

Hymns

- Jerry Aull - "Road of Prayer", "I Will Gaze"
- Kitty Cleveland - "Be Not Afraid"
- Bernadette Farrell - "Christ Be Our Light"
- Gretchen Harris - "The Cloud's Veil"
- Marty Haugen - "Gather Us In", "Canticle of the Sun", "We Are Many Parts", many psalm settings
- Michael Joncas - "On Eagle's Wings", "We Come to Your Feast"
- Robert Kochis - "In Remembrance of Me", "You Are Near"
- John Michael Talbot - Songs for Worship, Vols. 1 and 2
- David Haas - "Blest Are They", "You Are Mine"
- Dan Schutte - "Here I Am, Lord", "Sing a New Song", "You Are Near"
- Bob Dufford, S.J. - "Be Not Afraid", "All the Ends of the Earth"
- John Foley, S.J. - "One Bread, One Body"
- Roc O'Connor, S.J. - "Lift Up Your Hearts"
- Tim Manion - "I Lift Up My Soul"

Spoken Word

- Podcasts by Br. William Short, OFM

Discussion Question

1. What audio resources has my Fraternity used in Initial Formation? Ongoing Formation?
2. How can music be used to enlighten and instruct my Fraternity? How can it be incorporated into Initial Formation? Ongoing Formation?

Other Formation Resources

Websites and Online Resources

- The Holy See, <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html>
- Secular Franciscan Order, <http://ciofs.org>
- The National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, <http://www.nafra-sfo.org>
- Our Lady of the Angels Region Website, <http://www.ourladyoftheangelsregion.org>
- Our Lady of the Angels Region Facebook Page
- National Formation Commission, <http://www.nafraformation.org>
- Holy Name Province, <http://www.hnp.org>
- Online courses: St Bonaventure University, Franciscan Institute, Franciscan University, Boston College, Notre Dame (STEP), etc.
- United States Council of Catholic Bishops-USCCB website
- Divine Office, <http://divineoffice.org> - online Liturgy of the Hours
- Franciscan Media, <http://franciscanmedia.org>
- American Catholic, <http://americancatholic.org>
- Your diocese's website

YouTube Channels

- EWTN
- Apostleship of Prayer
- The Vatican
- U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
- America Media
- The Franciscans - Holy Name Province
- American Catholic - Production channel for Franciscan Media, Cincinnati, Ohio

Videos and Artwork

- The San Damiano Crucifix
- Art by Giotto di Bondone, Michelangelo, etc,
- Brother Sun, Sister Moon (video)
- A Man For All Seasons (video)
- The Ten Commandments (video)
- St. Clare of Assisi and The Poor Clares (video)

Discussion Questions

1. What other resources has my fraternity used for Initial Formation? Ongoing Formation?
2. How can formation resources be adapted to meet the needs of my fraternity?

Checklist for Secular Franciscan Formation Resources¹²

(National Formation Commission member Anne Mulqueen, O.F.S., March 2001, 2005)

When a Formation Director or Formation Team needs to determine the extent to which a particular text is a good resource to use for Secular Franciscan formation, put it to the following test.

√ Check for YES

_____ Does the resource evidence explicit and consistent reference to the Second Vatican Council, the 1978 Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, the 1985 Ritual of the SFO, and the General Constitutions of the SFO?

_____ Does the resource convey a clear statement of the nature of the Secular Franciscan vocation with emphasis on the permanent and secular aspects of this vocation?

_____ Does the resource emphasize that our formation is never-ending process and that initial formation is simply the beginning of a Secular Franciscan's lifetime journey to God by following the example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi?

_____ Does the resource contain references to the following essential elements of each formation session: (1) The Gospel; (2) The SFO Rule; (3) Franciscan writings; (4) Church documents, especially Vatican II and subsequent documents on the role of the laity in the Church?

_____ Does the resource provide opportunities to apply insights and knowledge acquired through the formation process so that, in truth, the lives of those in formation are transformed?

_____ Does the resource contain clear examples of Secular Franciscan spirituality and apostolic involvement, especially with regard to the work of the apostolic commissions?

_____ Does the resource emphasize that our vocation commits us to a life of living the Gospel in fraternity, to a communal way of life rather than a life of private piety lived in isolation from other Secular Franciscans?

_____ Does the resource accentuate that in our daily lives, we live the essence of the Gospel by following Francis and Clare of Assisi (1) through a process of ongoing conversion; (2) in community; (3) as secular people; and (4) in life-giving union with all Franciscans?

_____ Does the resource, if used for initial formation, fully explain the Rites and Ceremonies experienced during initial formation and does it emphasize the significance of these Rites and Ceremonies in the continuing journey of formation?

If you have checked "yes" for six or more questions, the resource can be considered good to excellent. If you have checked "yes" for less than six questions, in all likelihood the resource is not appropriate for primary use.

¹² FUN Manual, Chapter 5

Additional Guidelines for Selecting Franciscan Formation Resources

Does the resource follow authentic Roman Catholic teachings handed down by the Vatican and Bishops?

Does the resource meet the needs my fraternity's charism?

Is the resource appropriate for all members of the Fraternity?

Does the resource embrace the Franciscan values of joy and poverty?

Discussion Questions

1. What additional guidelines can be used in selecting formation resources for my fraternity?

Suggested Formation Topics¹³

- The Life of St. Francis
- The Life of St. Clare
- JPIC & Catholic Social Teaching
- Important documents of the Church and of the Magisterium
- Conversion & Penitence
- Franciscan Poverty, Joy and Humility
- Rule of The OFS
- Francis and His Approach to Divinity
- Profession
- Fraternity
- Franciscan Theology, Spirituality and Tradition
- Francis and the Blessed Virgin Mary
- History of the SFO

For Further Discussion

1. What formation topics has my fraternity used for Initial Formation? Ongoing formation?
2. How can I apply what I've learned in this session to my fraternity's formation program?

¹³ Fun Manual, page 4