

June 15, 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

This past weekend, your Regional Executive Council gathered in Beacon, NY, at St. Lawrence Retreat Center to begin the process of “visioning” for our region. It was a tremendously fruitful weekend due to the hard work of a number of Council members and the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout our time together.

One of the themes that will heavily influence the future vision for our region has to do with our identity as Secular Franciscans—how we see ourselves and how others see us. It is interesting to note that even before our weekend discussions took place, Brother Doug and I have been raising precisely this theme with the fraternities we have been visiting.

Much of the material below is quoted or paraphrased from the following sources: CIOFS.org; the **FUN Manual** section on *Vocation: pp. 11-13; Article 30.2 Constitutions; Franciscan Journey* by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap. and Marie Amore, OFS, author of the *Vocation* chapter. Thank you also to Assumption Fraternity for your input!

What does it mean to be a Secular Franciscan?

Profession is by its nature a permanent and perpetual commitment. At the moment of profession, we are linked and bound to the Order. We become part of a specific Fraternity; our life acquires meaning within the Fraternity; we serve our brothers and sisters. Profession is the basis of opening our hearts, taking on activities and service to the advantage of the Order, of society and of the Church. To be professed means assuming a continual pledge of evangelical conversion. The perpetually professed, according to their capability and possibility and in the light of the interests of the Order, cannot be exempt, except for serious motives, from accepting the positions or functions asked of them at any level in the Fraternity whenever requested. (Paraphrased from CIOFS.org)

- A Secular Franciscan (or someone with a vocation to be a Secular Franciscan)...
 - Is a strong practicing Catholic.
 - Has the desire to follow the Gospel and shows:
 - Simplicity (without pretense)
 - Poverty (Confidence in the Father)
 - Humility (Truth of what and who we are before God)
 - Minority (Recognition that we are servants—not superior)
 - Abandonment to God (Trusting in God’s unconditional love)
 - Has a personal faith relationship with Jesus (not just intellectual or devotional)
 - Is hope-filled
 - Recognizes the need for daily conversion
 - Lives the Rule and Constitutions and is committed to fraternity life
 - Trusts in God and the importance of God in his/her life
 - Has reverence for all creation and a sense of respect for it
 - Is willing to share creative ideas and life with the fraternity
 - Is willing to be present to his/her brothers and sisters in fraternity
 - Is willing to witness to the Gospel through word and example
 - Prays daily—especially Mass (when possible) and the Liturgy of the Hours
 - Actively collaborates (in accordance with personal situation) in the obligations and animation of the fraternity.

Our vocation is a gift and a commitment that must be strengthened continually. We are not enrolled in a club or society; we have made a life commitment at profession. How we live our lives and how we see ourselves, is what others will see. People should recognize us as Catholics and as Franciscans without our having to tell them.

First, however, we must recognize ourselves. When we look in the mirror, do we see a Secular Franciscan looking back at us?

The Commitment checklist that follows can be used privately or with the entire fraternity. The more we meditate on our commitment and on our Rule and Constitutions, the more we will be transformed in our Franciscan lives as followers of Christ.

Blessings and joy to each of you,
Diane

My OFS Commitment Checklist

Please check off all that apply to you. This is a personal check list and will not be shared. You are not required to do everything, but you absolutely should be doing some things from each category.

<p><u>Fraternity Activities</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend gatherings regularly each month <i>(Call in to be excused for a good reason)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Help set up before the meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Help clean up after the meeting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer for refreshments</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer to give a talk at the meeting for continuing formation</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer for Closing Prayer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pray each day for those on the Fraternity Prayer list and for the deceased of the fraternity.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Donation to _____ <i>(fraternity charity)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Donation to _____ <i>(fraternity charity)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Participation in Fraternity Apostolate</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fraternity event <i>(attend/invite others)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fraternity event <i>(help set up or clean up)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Keep in touch with excused members through visits, cards or phone calls</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Offer to pick up someone who needs a ride to the gathering.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Willing to be nominated and/or hold an office in the fraternity.</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Fraternity-sponsored Holy Hour or Spiritual Event or other event (outside of meeting time)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Invite a friend to attend a gathering <i>(Possible vocation)</i></p> <p><u>Region/Cluster</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Region Workshops and/or Region Retreat</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Cluster gatherings</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Convivenza/Chapter of Ministers</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Transitus/Feast Day Celebrations</p>	<p><u>Spiritual and Franciscan Life</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Pray a form of Liturgical prayer each day <i>(i.e. the Liturgy of the Hours or Office of the Passion or Little Office of the Blessed Mother or 12 Our Fathers)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Attend Mass regularly: <i>Sundays, Holy Days and as often as possible daily</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Daily examination of conscience <i>(We have committed ourselves to daily conversion.)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read and meditate on Sacred Scripture <i>"Go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel"</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read and meditate on our Rule of Life</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Read the Constitutions of our order</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Make a yearly retreat or at least a Day of Recollection</p> <p><i>Other devotions and prayers, especially the Rosary, are also a part of our daily prayer lives.</i></p> <p><u>Personal</u></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Set priorities <i>(As a lay-person I remember that Family is first, then my job, then my Franciscan family (local fraternity, cluster and Region, National and International fraternities) and then all other activities.)</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Set a good example in family life and workplace</p>
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