

# **MODULE 1.           ORIENTATION PHASE**

Initiation into the Secular Franciscan Order takes place step by step in the midst of the fraternity. The purpose of the ORIENTATION PHASE is to determine some basic dispositions of prospective members that are essential to building fraternity and entering into mature, committed relationships.

## **SUGGESTED SCREENING NORMS**

1. Does the person have the obvious desire to learn about the Secular Franciscan Order?
2. Does the person indicate proper motivation:  
is the prospective member looking for a pious organization only?  
apostolic action only? a social life only? or a way of life, a lifestyle?
3. Is the person free from any responsibility or restriction that would hamper the person from following the Secular Franciscan Rule, such as poor health, emotional or psychological problems?
4. Does the person have a basic understanding of the Catholic Faith, and display a good mix of apostolic activity and prayer life?
5. Is the person capable and willing to be an active participant in fraternity life and the formation program?
6. Does the person understand that the Secular Franciscan Order is a vocation involving permanent commitment?

If there is a potential problem with a prospective member, it should be handled immediately, tactfully, and with great charity.

Depending upon the background and experience of the individual, it might be necessary during this phase to give a brief review of basic Catholic teachings in the light of II Vatican Council Christology and ecclesiology. Without this background and foundation, the Inquirers and candidates will not be able to understand and appreciate the purpose, meaning and structure of the Secular Franciscan life embodied in the Rule.

## **MINIMUM CONTENT FOR THE ORIENTATION PHASE**

**An overview of:**

**O-1) The Life of Francis** (additional reading)

**O-2) The Branches of the Franciscan Family**

**O-3) The Secular Franciscan Order**

**O-4) Phases of Formation and Expectations**

**O-5) Brief Review of Catholic Doctrine and Christian Morals \***

**O-6) The Franciscan Movement & Franciscan Family**

**O-7) Elements of Ecclesiology and Theology of the Laity**

**O-8) The Apostles Creed**

**\*may require additional study in an RCIA style program before entering Inquiry.**

**Initial Interview and any other necessary Interviews needed by each group.**

## **MODULE 2.**

## **INQUIRY PHASE**

**The INQUIRY PHASE** as the first period of initiation, is a time of discernment and choice of the Franciscan life. During this time, the Inquirer participates in the life of the Fraternity, and comes to understand the way of life.

**At the same time, the fraternity comes to know the Inquirer better, so that it can discern his/her request to become part of the fraternity. During this phase, the INQUIRER with the help of the Formation Director/Team would seek to discern these basic questions:**

1. What is a vocation, and how am I called?
2. What is gospel life, and how am I called to live it?
3. What is a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order, and how am I called to live this way of life?

It is the proper function of the Council together with the Formation Director/Team to dialogue with the INQUIRER to determine suitability and readiness of the INQUIRER for admission to Candidacy.

## **MINIMUM CONTENT FOR THE INQUIRY PHASE**

- I-1) The Catholic Church in light of Vatican Council II (Franciscan Application)**
- I-2) Lay Spirituality (as a Franciscan)**
- I-3) Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order and Organizational Structure Of the Secular Franciscan Order**
- I-4) Franciscan Movement I - Life of St. Francis (Spirituality of Francis)**
- I-5) Franciscan Movement II - Your Own Journey**
- History of the Secular Franciscan Order (Moved to Candidacy C-18)**
- I-6) Vocation & Discernment**
- I-7) Charism of Founder & Mission in the Church**
- I-8) Nature of the Secular Franciscan Order**
- I-9) Our Identity as a Secular Franciscan**
- Scripture & Basic Christian Doctrine (Moved to Candidacy C-1))**

**Suggest reading a Bio of St. Francis\* (Outside Reading)**

**\*Discuss insights from a bio of Francis**

**Do any Interviews needed by each group.**

## **MODULE 3. CANDIDACY PHASE**

The importance of the CANDIDACY PHASE stems from its purpose to prepare the Candidate for a life-time commitment to live the Rule of the SFO; that is, to make a “mature and enduring decision to participate as fully as possible in the Church’s life and mission according to the manner of St. Francis” [ Rule Article 23 comment]. This period of formation begins with the Rite of Admission into the Secular Franciscan Order, the public acceptance of the Candidate’s request and intention to live the gospel life in the manner of St. Francis.

During CANDIDACY, the entire fraternity participates in, and nurtures the ever deepening of the Candidate’s evangelical living out of the SFO Rule. It is important that the Candidate be given opportunities to experience, interiorize and integrate the gospel values presented in SFO Rule. The time of CANDIDACY is an extended period, lasting at least 18 months. Just because the minimum time of Candidacy is 18 months, there is no reason why that time frame should be the maximum. In particular circumstances, it may be prudent to extend the actual time beyond 18 months to broaden and deepen the Candidate’s formation experience.

The main purpose of CANDIDACY is to prepare the Candidate to make PERMANENT COMMITMENT PROFESSION of the Rule. However the fraternity, through the decision of the Fraternity Council and the Formation Director/Team, together with the Candidate discern one of the three possible options:

1. Extension of the actual time of Candidacy before profession. Permanent Commitment.
2. Profession, Permanent Commitment followed by a structured time of special continuing education in which are covered an in-depth study and further experience in the area of Scripture, Ecclesiology, Franciscanism and fraternity structure, etc.
3. Temporary commitment is discouraged.

## **MINIMUM CONTENT FOR THE CANDIDACY PHASE**

**The Pauline Rule (Included in Our Rule C- 1,2,3 below)**

**C-1) Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels (Outside reading)**

**C-2) The Volterra letter (Prologue to the Rule)**

**C-3,4,5) Our Rule (3 sessions)**

**C-6,7) JPIC (2 sessions)**

**C-8) Conversion – penitential movement**

**C-9,10) St. Francis and His Approach to Divinity (2 sessions)**

**C-11,12) Profession and the Secular Franciscan (2 sessions)**

**C-13,14) Understanding Franciscan Theology Tradition & Spirituality (2 Sessions)**

**C-15) Fraternity and Francis & Fraternity as a Fundamental Element**

**C-16) Francis & the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**C-17) St. Clare of Assisi**

**C-18) History of the SFO and its Rule (Moved here from Inquiry)**

**Franciscan Spirituality (In C-13 and 14)**

**Franciscan Apostolic Life (In C-15)**

**Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order (In Inquiry I-3)**

**General Constitutions & Statutes – study guides available at:**

**[www.nafraformation.org](http://www.nafraformation.org)**

**Do any needed Interviews during Candidacy and the Interview before Profession.**

## **MODULE 4. ON-GOING FORMATION**

The purpose of the ON-GOING FORMATION PHASE is to support the professed member's commitment, and to strengthen his/her Franciscan vocation so that the on-going conversion process will continue as a lifestyle.

On-going Formation is a process of renewal, too, for the entire fraternity by which we are encouraged and challenged to live our vocation in the actual situations and contingencies of daily living.

On-Going Formation is a frame of mind, an attitude acquired during initial formation, that we are in a continual process of personal conversion all the days of our life. It is important to emphasize that although On-going Formation necessarily includes additional information and up-dating in various areas of spirituality, more important is the unfolding of and deepening of, and greater fidelity to our gospel lifestyle, our Commitment to fraternity.

### **1. The Fraternity Meeting**

Every Secular Franciscan is responsible for his/her own On-going Formation. Just as a candidate has the primary responsibility for his/her own spiritual growth, so too, the professed member has the primary responsibility and obligation of Continuous personal renewal.

At the same time, however, it is the responsibility of the local Fraternity to provide suitable opportunities for on-going formation. The Fraternity Meeting should be the main source of on-going formation. Emphasis should be on enriching and deepening the professed member's knowledge and experience of Franciscan history and spirituality and gospel living through shared prayer, reflection, study and recreation.

Greater use could also be made of various parish events which provide expert speakers on current issues of importance to the specific diocese and/or parish and the church as a whole.

Opportunities for retreats, days of renewal, community celebrations, interaction between fraternities, with the friars, the Clares, and the Third Order religious should be arranged on a regular basis. Attendance at Regional and National gatherings, and workshops and seminars should be encouraged.

### **2. Special Needs**

While On-going Formation is for all Secular Franciscans, there are certain groups which might be the object of special attention:

- Newly Professed;
- Councilors;
- Formation Personnel.

**a) NEWLY PROFESSED** – Special learning and experience could be made available during this time – a deepening in Sacred Scripture, the role of the laity, and further study of Secular Franciscan history and spirituality.

b) **COUNCILORS** – Persons already serving on the fraternity Council as well as those persons the Fraternity discerns could be adequately prepared for in the various capacities. Special learning and experience could be provided covering such topics as what it takes to be a leader, the study of Franciscan leadership as ministry and service, and the development of good communication skills.

c) **FORMATION PERSONNEL** – a very special subject of fundamental importance is the formation of those form; they, more than all others have the serious duty of renewing and up-dating themselves - in other words, of constantly deepening and improving the living of their own gospel life.

Along with choosing suitable persons for this ministry, the local fraternity also has the obligation to provide training and preparation for this important ministry.

## **MINIMUM CONTENT FOR THE ON-GOING FORMATION PHASE**

**The Pauline Rule**

**The Volterra letter (prelude to the Rule)**

**Writings of Francis and Clare**

**Franciscan History**

**Papal Encyclicals**

**Pastoral Statements from the NCCB**

**Official Documents from our Franciscan Family**

**Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order**

**General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order**

**National Statutes and Regional Governance Norms**

**CIOFS Monthly Formation Plans**

## **Formation Form and Methodology**

**National Statutes Article 19.5.a&b**

a) **The form to be employed in both initial and ongoing formation is that found in the *Guidelines of Initial Formation*. [ Const. # 38.2 ]**

b) **The methodology employed in Formation should be both interactive and experiential in nature. [ Const. 40.4 ]**