

FORMATION PROCESS

What is Formation?

Formation in and for the Secular Franciscan way of life is understood as the realistic fostering of the growth of the individual Secular Franciscan and fraternities so that the way we live in today's world may conform more and more to the example of the Holy Gospel.

Although there are stages of formation to be traversed, it is a single process of growth, assimilation and integration of values and experiences; it is likewise an on-going conversion, so that, enlivened by the Spirit, we may conform to the image of the Son of God. (Guidelines for Initial Formation)

“The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.” Article 4 -Secular Franciscan Rule

Purpose of the Formation Process

Realizing that God “calls” a person to the Secular Franciscan Order, still, every person within the Order has the responsibility to nurture the genuine call. The purpose of the entire formation process is to accompany the person on his/her journey of discovery of God, of St. Francis, and of the individual's own call.

Initial and On-going Formation is the key to renewal and updating in the Secular Franciscan Order. (Guidelines for Initial Formation)

Overview of the Phases of the Formation Process

The formation process is a spiritual journey which consists of three main phases or stages of growth and maturation.

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

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.

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 Secular Franciscan Order; 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.

On-going Formation

The purpose of On-going Formation 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.

(Guidelines for Initial Formation)

NAFRA Statutes Article 19 Formation

1: Orientation

- a. *Orientation is a time for determining a person’s interest, eligibility and disposition to enter into the initial formation process [cf. Guidelines for Initial Formation in the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States (hereafter Guidelines for Initial Formation), page 2*
- b. *The period of orientation shall consist of not less than three (3) months.*

2: Initial Formation

- a. *Inquiry – The period of Inquiry, which begins with the Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming [cf. Ritual, page 9], shall consist of not less than six (6) months.*
- b. *Candidacy – The period of Candidacy, which begins with the Rite of Admission [cf. Ritual, page 11], shall consist of not less than eighteen (18) months and not more than thirty-six (36) months.*
- c. *All persons in initial formation, in addition to attending their formation sessions, must participate in the meetings of the Local Fraternity as this is an indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life [cf. General Constitutions, article #40.3].*

- d. *To be admitted to the SFO in the United States, a person must be a fully initiated member of the Catholic Church (i.e., having received the Sacraments of Baptism, Chrismation/Confirmation and Holy Eucharist) in addition to being an actively practicing Catholic.*

3. *Profession*

- a. *The minimum age for perpetual profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is twenty-one (21) years.*
- b. *The minimum age for temporary profession as a Secular Franciscan in the United States is eighteen (18) years.*

4. *Ongoing Formation*

Ongoing formation is the responsibility of all professed members consonant with article #44 of the General Constitutions.

5: *Form and Methodology*

- a. *The form (i.e., content and process; cf. General Constitutions, #38.2) to be employed in both initial and ongoing formation is that found in the Guidelines for Initial Formation.*
- b. *The methodology employed in formation should be both interactive and experiential in nature [cf. General Constitutions, #40.4].*
- c. *Opportunities for fraternities to meet together for the purposes of common ongoing and initial formation shall occur whenever possible at all levels of fraternity [cf. General Constitutions, #40.1].*