

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS

Part IV: The Ongoing Formation Phase

When we look at the Secular Franciscan formation process, it is important to see it as a continuum, that is, each stage flowing into the next. Aspects that are essential in the first phase, Orientation, will still be essential in the second, Inquiry, the third, Candidacy, and into the Ongoing Formation of professed members.

The purpose of the Ongoing Formation Phase is to support the professed members' commitment, and to strengthen their Franciscan vocation so that the ongoing conversion process will continue as a lifestyle.

“Begun by the preceding stages, 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” (*General Constitutions*, article 44.1).

- Ongoing Formation is a process of renewal for the entire Fraternity by which we are encouraged and challenged to live our vocation in the actual situations and contingencies of daily living.
- Ongoing Formation is the outgrowth of proper Initial Formation, realizing that we are in a continual process of conversion and growth all the days of our life.
- Ongoing Formation necessarily includes additional information and updating in various areas of spirituality, and deepening of our commitment to the Gospel life. None of us ever completes formation; it is a lifelong process.
- Monthly Fraternity gatherings are the ordinary place for Ongoing Formation.
- Other opportunities for Ongoing Formation include:
 - retreats
 - days of renewal
 - community celebrations
 - interaction between fraternities
 - interaction with the Friars, the Poor Clares, the Third Order Religious
 - attendance at Regional and National gatherings
 - workshops and seminars

• **Suggested content for the Ongoing Formation phase:**

- the *Prologue to the SFO Rule* (the *Volterra Letter*)
- a detailed study of the 1978 *SFO Rule*
- writings of Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and other Franciscan women and men
- Franciscan history
- articles from **TAU-USA**
- papal encyclicals, apostolic letters and statements
- pastoral statements from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- official documents and statements of the Franciscan Family
- detailed study of the *SFO Ritual* and *General Constitutions of the SFO*
- International, National and Regional statutes
- other Franciscan prayer experiences (for example, the Office of the Passion)
- experiencing each other's apostolates

Rite: Ceremony on the Anniversary of Profession (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 30-32)

Published by the National Formation Commission as Part 4 of a four-part statement on the process of Secular Franciscan formation in the United States, March 2001, revised 2005.