

# Sample Initial Formation Syllabi and Requirements

**This sample initial formation syllabi and requirements document was created by the St. Francis Fraternity, Andover, Massachusetts.**

## **Overview and Purpose**

This document is meant to be used as a guideline for the content of each of the stages of initial formation: Orientation, Inquiry and Candidacy. The material in this document was taken from Come and See, "The SFO Formation Process". The purpose of this document is to insure that those in initial formation have a consistent and comprehensive formation experience.

For each phase, a recommended text is provided, a syllabus, goals of the phase of formation, and requirements.

The number of sessions listed for each phase is the minimum required, and can be extended depending on the needs of the particular individuals involved.

We are moving toward the model recommended by National of rotating phases of initial formation.

In order to insure that the Orientation phase is carried out with a minimum of redundancy and disruption, new orientees will meet with a "welcomer" the first month, who will obtain their address and phone number as well as provide a brief overview of what to expect in the formation process. The following month, the newcomer will join the Orientation Class at whatever lesson they are on. The Orientee will finish out the four sessions, and then pick up the earlier ones if missed.

The Inquiry phase will also be a rotating class. In other words, when Orientees are welcomed into the Fraternity, they would start the next month on whatever session the ongoing class is on. They would finish out the lessons, and then start at session 1 and take up the material that they did not cover. There will be an effort to make Candidacy also an ongoing class, allowing Inquirers to move to Candidacy when they are ready.

This rotating schedule will allow individuals to continue their formation when they are ready, and not have to wait until another class begins. This also eliminates the need for multiple classes, at various stages, for each phase in the formation process.

All those in initial formation are expected to attend the regular Fraternity meetings and stay for the social so that they can discern whether or not the SFO life is appropriate for them in the context of Fraternity.

## **Formation Team Member Guidelines**

It is critical that each individual in initial formation understand expectations, and is aware of where they are in the process. Under no circumstances should their progress be delayed unreasonably, nor should they ever be rushed to take the next step.

Formation team members will keep the Formation Director apprised each month of where they are in the syllabus, as well as any potential issues with documentation requirements or disposition of individuals toward an SFO vocation. The Formation Director, in turn, will provide regular reports to the Fraternity Council.

To facilitate this reporting, an attendance sheet will be provided to the Formation Director after each month's formation sessions.

## **The Orientation Phase – A Syllabus**

**Text:** Come and See, Orientation and Inquiry: An Invitation to Explore the Secular Franciscan Life, Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., Teresa V. Baker, S.F.O.

### **Session 1 –**

- Review of Come and See pages 7-9, The Orientation Phase
- Review signs of having (or not having) a call to the Secular Franciscan Order, pages 18 and 19.

### **Session 2 –**

- Chapters 1 and 2 – “Getting to know You” and “What’s It All About”  
Come and See, pages 23 through 35

### **Session 3 –**

- Chapters 3 and 4 – “Franciscan symbols & history” and “Franciscan values and theology”, pages 36 through 53

### **Session 4 –**

- Chapter 5 and 6 – “The process of discernment” and “Reviewing the Situation”

## **Goals of the Orientation Phase**

Upon completion of the Orientation Phase, the prospective Inquirer should:

1. Understand what a vocation to the Secular Franciscan Order is,
2. Have an understanding of how to discern a vocation,
3. Have an understanding of Catholic doctrine and Christian morals,
4. Have a basic understanding of Franciscan prayer life and apostolic activity,
5. Have an understanding of the phases of the Secular Franciscan formation process,
6. Be introduced to the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare,
7. Understand the branches of the Franciscan family,
8. Be familiar with the 1978 Rule and brief history of the Secular Franciscan Order,
9. Have an understanding of some of our Franciscan symbols (the Tau, the San Damiano Crucifix), and
10. Have experienced Franciscan prayer.

## **Requirements of the Orientation Phase**

1. Complete an interview with the Formation Director or Formation Team Member,
2. Be a Catholic in good standing,
3. Provide Sacramental Information – Certificates for:
  - Orders (if diocesan priest or deacon)
  - Baptism
  - Confirmation
  - Matrimony
  - Holy Decree of Nullity (if divorced and remarried)
4. Obtain approval by the Fraternity Council for beginning the Inquiry phase.

## **Supplemental Materials**

1. See Come and See for recommendations: page 9, 12, 35, 44, 53, 58

In appropriate lessons, the Formation facilitator should introduce appropriate materials. See above.

## The Inquiry Phase – A Syllabus

**Text:** Come and See, Orientation and Inquiry: An Invitation to Explore the Secular Franciscan Life, Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., Teresa V. Baker, S.F.O.

### **Session 1 –**

- Review of Come and See pages 9-12, The Inquiry Phase
- Review of Come and See pages 18-19 = Signs that a person may or may not have a call to the SFO
- Review of pages 20-21 – qualifications and requirements for admission to the SFO:
  - ✓ Copies of Baptism and Confirmation certifications
  - ✓ Copy of Marriage Certificate and Annulment documentation if applicable
  - ✓ Recommendation from Pastor or Spiritual Director
- Discuss biographies of Francis and Clare (Englebert, Bodo)

### **Session 2 –**

- Chapters 1 and 2 – “A look at the call to holiness” and “You and the Holy Spirit”  
Come and See, pages 63 to 79
- Introduction to the writings of Francis and Clare. May use the table of contents of Francis and Clare: The Complete Works, Paulist Press.

### **Session 3 –**

- Chapter 3 – “The Importance of Listening”, pages 80 to 86
- Discussion of the discernment process
- Review of Liturgical prayer – forms recommended for Secular Franciscans.

### **Session 4 –**

- Chapter 4 – “Clare – a woman’s touch”, pages 87 to 93
- Franciscan Prayer Experiences – Vigil of the Feast of St. Clare, the Transitus, Franciscan Crown and Stations of the Cross.

### **Session 5 –**

- Chapter 5 – “Rule, Constitutions, etc.”, pages 94 to 101
- Review Rule, Constitutions and the Ritual. Insure that Inquirers have copies.

### **Session 6 –**

- Chapter 6 – “The Gospel and faithfulness”, pages 102 to 111
- Preparation for Rite of Admission – Ritual, pages 11 to 17

### **Goals of the Inquiry Phase**

Upon completion of the Inquiry Phase, the prospective Candidate should:

1. Know whether or not he/she wishes to continue with the Secular Franciscan Order in preparation for profession,
2. Know the major events in the lives of Francis and Clare,
3. Have an exposure to the writings of Francis and Clare,
4. Know the history and organizational structure of the SFO, and how it relates to the greater Franciscan family,
5. Be familiar with the SFO Rule, General Constitutions and the SFO Ritual, particularly how the Rule relates to the Catechism of the Catholic Church,
6. Understand the role of Scripture in the Secular Franciscan life,
7. Understand secular, lay spirituality,
8. Know how to pray the Liturgy of the Hours, or one of the alternative forms recommended in the Rule, and
9. Be familiar with other Franciscan prayer experiences, such as the Transitus, the Vigil of the Feast of St. Clare, the Franciscan Crown and the Stations of the Cross.

### **Requirements of the Inquiry Phase**

1. Half way through Inquiry, an interview with the Spiritual Assistant, Minister, and Formation Director
2. Personal letter from the applicant to the council requesting admission to the Candidate formation phase.
3. Approval by the Fraternity Council for the Rite of Admission

### **Supplemental Materials**

2. See Come and See for recommendations: page 9, 12, 35, 44, 53, 58, 79, 93, 100-101

In appropriate lessons, the Formation facilitator should introduce appropriate materials. See above.

## **The Candidacy Phase – A Syllabus**

**Text:** Catch Me a Rainbow Too – The Franciscan Journey, Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap., Teresa V. Baker, S.F.O.

### **Session 1 –**

- Review of Come and See pages 12-14, The Candidacy Phase
- Review of Syllabus

### **Session 2 –**

- Chapters 1 and 2 – “Looking At Life: Francis, Growth, SFO History” and “Checking the Call”, pages 1 through 32

### **Session 3 –**

- Chapter 3 – “Conversion”, pages 33 through 48

### **Session 4**

- Chapter 4 – “Exploring the Call”, pages 49 through 66

### **Session 5 –**

- Chapters 5 and 6 – “Listening to Scripture” and “Franciscans and Scripture”, pages 67 through 98
- Overview of Francis of Assisi – Early Documents

### **Session 6 –**

- Chapters 7 and 8 – “I Believe” and “God and Our World”, pages 99 and 134

### **Session 7 –**

- Chapters 9 and 10 – “On the Way – With Francis, Clare and Us” and “Who’s In Charge?”, pages 135 through 170

### **Session 8 –**

- Chapters 11 and 12 – “Talk to Me” and “Here I Am, Lord”, pages 171 and 204

### **Session 9 –**

- Chapters 13 and 14 – “Franciscans and Family Life” and “Seventy Times Seven”, pages 205 through 238

### **Session 10 –**

- Chapter 15 – “Hail, Full of Grace”, pages 239 through 256

### **Session 11 –**

- Chapter 16 – “Sacred Secularity”, pages 257 through 272

### **Session 12 –**

- Chapter 17 – “Getting Organized”, pages 273 through 292
- Review of the content and structure of the Constitutions

### **Session 13 –**

- Chapter 18 – “Ordinary Bible People and Us, pages 293 through 310

### **Session 14 –**

- Chapter 19 – “A Gospel Life – Getting It Together”, pages 311 through 328

### **Session 15 –**

- Chapters 20 and 21 – “The Singing Troubadour” and “Work – The Creative Touch”, pages 329 through 366

### **Session 16 –**

- Chapter 22 – “Prayer – Praise & Bless The Lord”, pages 367 through 384

### **Session 17 –**

- Chapter 23 – “The Franciscan Story: Personal Reflections”, pages 385 through 404

### **Session 18 –**

- Chapter 24 – “Somewhere Over the Rainbow”, pages 405 through 418

### **Goals of the Candidacy Phase**

Upon completion of the Candidacy Phase, the prospective Professed should:

1. Be familiar with the prologue of the SFO Rule,
2. Complete a thorough study of the 1978 SFO Rule,
3. Be familiar with Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, and have the opportunity to experience, interiorize and integrate gospel values,
4. Have an understanding of Franciscan spirituality,
5. Have an understanding of Secular Franciscan apostolic life,
6. Complete a detailed study of the SFO General Constitutions,
7. Be familiar with Lives of Secular Franciscan saints and other Franciscans,
8. Be familiar with Franciscan traditions and stories. (such as the Franciscan crown rosary, Stations of the Cross, Greccio, Gubbio, etc.),
9. Be familiar with the writings of Francis, Clare, Bonaventure and other Franciscan women and men,
10. Be introduced to Franciscan sources, including an understanding of the purpose of a medieval legend,
11. Have a continued experience of praying and leading the Liturgy of the Hours and other prayer forms,
12. Be exposed to other Franciscan prayer experiences. (for example, the Transitus),
13. Complete a study of the SFO Ritual, especially the Rite of Profession, and
14. Attend a retreat, or other suitable preparation, for Profession.

### **Requirements of the Candidacy Phase**

1. It is recommended that every candidate have a sponsor.
2. Half way through Candidacy, an interview with the Spiritual Assistant, Minister, and Formation Director
3. Three month prior to completion of Candidacy, applicant sends a personal request for profession letter to the fraternity council. A second interview takes place with the Spiritual Assistant, Minister, and Formation Director
4. When applicant completes Candidate Formation training and the Fraternity council approves request, the Rite of Permanent Profession takes place at a Mass.

### **Supplemental Materials**

See Catch Me a Rainbow, Too, Lester Bach, O.F.M. Cap. – Bibliography, pages 419

In appropriate lessons, the Formation facilitator should introduce relevant materials. See above.