

Guidelines for Newly Professed

General Constitutions Article 44

2. The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the temporarily professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.

Formation of the newly professed is taking place in many fraternities through various means. However, we feel that the obligation placed on the local formation directors to oversee initial and ongoing formation processes might become overwhelming. The newly professed seems to be the group that is most vulnerable due to lack of time and consideration, or numerous participants. Therefore, we set out the following guidelines:

Guidelines for Regional Formation Gatherings of the Newly Professed

Time Frame: four meetings within a year

How and Where:

- meeting in groups at Regional Fraternity gatherings
- meetings in clusters, areas, districts (however your regional fraternity is divided into smaller groups)
- meetings with other local fraternities or other groups of newly professed

Why:

- deepening of their initial permanent profession experience
- provide a support system
- a more gradual transition from a small intimate group setting to a larger group

Content:

- How is your vocation growing?
- What are its good points, its bad points, its ups, its downs?
- What new surprises have you discovered?
- What new insights?
- What does it mean to be professed?
- How are you giving ecclesial witness?
- What apostolate are you involved in?
- How has your prayer life changed?
- What do you find easy to follow in the Rule, what do you find difficult?
- Were your expectations of profession met?
- What improvements would you offer to formation process?
- Do you feel as if you fit in?

Structure: 4 meetings a year of the Newly Professed

1. Regional Day of Unity

- as your Region gathers for its annual Day of Unity, invite the Newly Professed and have them gather together in their own session to share

- How is your vocation going?
- What do you find difficult about not being in the smaller formation group?
- What new insights have you gained?
- What has surprised you?
- What has happened that you did not expect?

2. Day of Recollection

- Regional Executive Council invites the newly professed to a Day of Recollection set up just for them
- invite them to a uniquely Franciscan prayer experience
- have someone present them with a talk that is timely to their professional situation
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - How has their prayer life changed?
 - What does it mean to be professed?
 - What were their expectations?
 - Have their expectations of being a professed Franciscan been met?
 - Have them share their initial formational experiences

3. Clusters of Newly Professed

- clusters, districts, areas, local fraternities gather the newly professed together in smaller groupings
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - What are their fraternal issues?
 - Are they feeling more included?
 - What surprises continue to unfold for them?
 - What new insights are they gaining as they enter more deeply into fraternal life?
 - How has this time of gathering together enhanced their lives?

4. Gathering with other Newly Professed

- of the Franciscan family, friars, Poor Clares, Brothers and sisters of the Third Order
- other Third Order groups in your area
- afterward, invite them to share:
 - How do we give an ecclesial witness?
 - What apostolate are we involved in?
 - Do we reach out to other ecumenical gatherings?
 - How might we continue to network?

At a gathering for the newly professed it might be desirable to schedule a speaker who can address issues of being new Secular Franciscan members. Discussions can be initiated by asking the following suggested questions.

Questions for Newly Professed Group Discussion

- What did you like about your SFO formation?
- What did you not like about your SFO formation?
- How is your vocation growing?
- Define your spirituality
- What is at the core of your vocation?

- What keeps you going? What renews you?
- How do you see yourself in God's plan?
- How available and open are you to God and to others?
- What is your Franciscan passion? What lights your fire?
- How do you share your light with the world?
- What new insights have you gained by being a member of the SFO?
- What does it mean to be professed as a Secular Franciscan?
- How are you giving witness of Gospel living?
- Do you have a special apostolate?
- Has your prayer life changed?
- What do you find easy to follow in the SFO rule?
- Were your expectations of profession met?
- What improvements would you offer for our SFO formation process?
- Do you feel part of our fraternity life?
- Would you like to be an officer of our fraternity?
- Would you like to get involved in a regional position?
- What Franciscan book are you currently reading?

Ongoing formation meetings with the newly professed serve to help the new members adjust to fraternity life and to provide insights to improve formation programs for future members.

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