

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN FORMATION PROCESS

Part III: The Candidacy 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 time between the Rite of Admission and the Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel is the Candidacy phase of formation. This is a time for assisting and promoting the growth of the Candidate as a human person, as a Christian person, and as a Franciscan person. All three dimensions are interrelated and, if the vocation is true, will blend into one harmonious human being.

As in all phases of formation, it is essential that resources allow for dialogue and sharing between the Candidates and the Fraternity as well as among the Candidates themselves. This is a time for the Formation Director/Team to encourage the Candidates' growth in Franciscan spirituality and the practice of Gospel values. It is the time for the Candidates to take on a gradually more active role in the Fraternity and in society, especially by means of participation in Franciscan apostolates.

During Candidacy the Secular Franciscan Rule supplies the path, the approach, and the guide. Therefore, considerable emphasis is placed on reading, understanding, digesting and incarnating the Rule. The living out of the Rule is crucial in preparing for Profession since it provides the structure for growing in the spirit of penance and ongoing conversion within the context of the local Fraternity.

- Candidacy is the most important stage in the Initial Formation process since its purpose is to prepare the Candidate for a life-long commitment to live the *SFO Rule*, a mature and enduring decision to participate as fully as possible in the Church's life and mission according to the manner of Saint Francis.
- This period of formation begins with the Rite of Admission into the Secular Franciscan Order, the public acceptance by the Order of the Candidate's request and intention to live the Gospel life in the manner of Saint Francis as contained in the *SFO Rule* which has been approved by the Church.
- During Candidacy, the entire Fraternity participates in and nurtures the growth and development of the Candidate's evangelical living out of the *SFO Rule*.
- It is important that the Candidate be given opportunities to experience, interiorize, integrate and live out the Gospel values presented in the *SFO Rule*.
- **Time frame:** an extended period, ***lasting a minimum of eighteen months and up to a maximum of three years***. In particular circumstances, it may be prudent to extend the actual time of Candidacy beyond these norms to broaden and deepen the Candidate's formation experience.

• **Suggested content for the Candidacy phase:**

- the *Prologue to the SFO Rule* (the *Volterra Letter*)
 - a thorough study of the 1978 *SFO Rule*
 - Sacred Scripture, especially the Gospels, and the opportunity to experience, interiorize and integrate Gospel values
 - Franciscan spirituality
 - Secular Franciscan apostolic life
 - a detailed study of the *SFO General Constitutions*
 - lives of Secular Franciscan saints and other Franciscans
 - Franciscan traditions and stories (such as the Franciscan crown rosary, Stations of the Cross, Greccio, Gubbio, etc.)
 - writings of Francis and Clare
 - introduction to Franciscan sources, including an understanding of the purpose of a medieval legend
 - continued experience in praying and leading the *Liturgy of the Hours*
 - other Franciscan prayer experiences (for example, the Transitus)
 - a detailed study of the *SFO Ritual*, especially the Rites of Profession
- A retreat may serve as a fitting formation experience prior to making Profession

Rite: Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 18-26) or Rite of Temporary Commitment (see *SFO Ritual*, pages 27-29)