



CIOFS “FORMING THE FORMATORS”

—PART 3

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PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF LAST TIME, I want to finish up the CIOFS comments and ideas of this new “formation project” and then provide you with some updates of where we are.

The goal of our forthcoming National Formation Workshops is to present selected sessions from the Formators Manual, so we can offer **you the necessary elements of Christian doctrine and of Franciscan and secular spirituality** which will allow all Secular Franciscans to understand what means to be a Christian, a Franciscan and a members of a lay and secular Order of the Church, who have made a perpetual Profession (a true form of consecration), fully aware of their mission and capable of accomplishing it in the Church and in the world.

CIOFS TEXT FOLLOWS:

Much too often, we have in our Fraternities “pious” brothers and sisters who are not at all familiar with Sacred Scriptures. Too many of our brothers and sisters have foggy ideas on the Magisterium of the Church. The brothers and the sisters who have a true command of clear, precise and well defined Christian doctrine are very rare.

We are not trying to say that Secular Franciscans have to be professors of theology, however, it is essential that Secular Franciscans are sufficiently prepared be faithful interpreters of the Church mission, at the forefront of its apostolic action (as members of a Public Association of Faithful we receive a mission in *Nomine Ecclesiae*, in the name of the Church). It is, therefore, essential that all the elements of formation which our brothers and sisters have to receive be **clear, exact, comprehensive** and, at the very least, **sufficient**, though necessarily concise.

Much too often have we heard the objection that the characterizing features of Franciscanism are simplicity, humility ... but these affirmations need to be qualified and, in any case, these Franciscan characteristics must not be confused with the ignorance of our Faith and of Revelation!

Saint Francis was not a theologian; he was simple, humble and used to define himself “idiot”, but ... what a profound understanding he had of Faith and of theology !!!

THIS IS THE MODEL WE HAVE TO FOLLOW !

The National and Regional Formators will have to receive a theological and doctrinal formation well above the average and will have to be able to wisely adapt and choose, together with the local formators, what is needed and what can be proposed to the brothers and sisters in the regional and local Fraternities.

Obviously as we move toward the local levels, where the Order concretely lives, only the brothers and the sisters who are responsible for the local formation, together with their local spiritual assistants, will be in a position to evaluate the quality of the vocation of a specific person, of his/her dedication, personal commitment, and of all those other elements which may often be more important than the formal doctrinal preparation itself.

In any case, **we must do everything possible so as to raise the level and the quality of local formation, both spiritual and doctrinal**, reaching each and every brother and sister of each Fraternity of the Order in the whole world.

I hope you can all see that the intention of CIOFS is to end the days of “just doing what we want” and calling that formation. As a true Order within the Church we are moving towards a more complete formation plan, that will identify those elements essential to build an understanding our vocation and profession into the Secular Franciscan Order. Our Franciscan charism is a beautiful expression of our concept of the nature of God as Lover and not as judge. The plan that is being unfolded is aimed to specifically give to our Formators the tools they need both for their own formation, and those elements that NEED to be at the core of all the fraternities’ actions throughout all phases of Formation.

It is our hope that once the Formators experience the workshops (school if you will) that they can work with their local Formation Directors to develop formation plans or guides that work for their specific regions and still includes all the essential elements.

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO BEGIN DOING NOW?

Saving and budgeting for your region Formation Director and/or formation team so you have a presence at the first workshop: we are asking for at least two from every region and if there are additional places open we can entertain more as desired.

MAY 12-15, 2011

**AT THE SHRINE OF OUR LADY OF THE SNOWS
BELLEVILLE, IL**

Here are some of the topics that are considered fundamental to our formation process, and in which there will need to be some level of understanding before a person professes into our Order:

Possible orientation topics: The Creed of the Catholic Church, Ecclesiology of the Laity, The Franciscan Movement, Basic Catholic Doctrine.

Inquiry topics: What is Formation, Franciscan Movement part 2, Basic Catholic Doctrine, Our Vocation, Nature of the SFO, Identity of the Secular Franciscan, Charism & Mission in the Church, discussion based on a bio of St. Francis

Candidacy topics: Our Rule, JPIC, Conversion & Penance, Fraternity, Francis' approach to God/Franciscan Tradition, Our Blessed Mother, St Clare, Understanding our Profession, History of SFO, FYYA, Study Guides for the General Constitutions & Our National Statutes, Franciscan Saints with emphasis on SFO.

Many of these topics will make up the core of the Formators manual, while several will be future materials posted on the National Formation Commission website for free download.

Selected topics from the above list will also form the basis of the workshop presentations, and will be available in the initial Formators Manual. These topics are stand alone so each fraternity can structure their own program and sequence of presentations based on the people they have in formation and their specific needs.

That said, we are on track to present this to the National Chapter this October and to prepare for the 2011 Workshop.