



**CIOFS
“FORMING
THE
FORMATORS”**

by

BOB FITZSIMMONS, SFO
NATIONAL FORMATION CHAIR
nfcnafra@verizon.net

**ATTENTION ALL REGION FORMATION DIRECTORS
AND FORMATION TEAMS:**

**NATIONAL FORMATION WORKSHOP
“FORMING THE FORMATORS”
Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL
MAY 12-15, 2011**

We would like 2 attendees from every region, and if possible, your regional Spiritual Assistant to attend and to become the basis for your regional formation team!!!

Registration form is available at www.nafraformation.org
Currently we are giving preference to Regional Formation teams.

WHY THE “NEW” FORMATION?

Blessings all! I am guessing that some, possibly many of you are wondering why there is such a fuss over the new additions to our initial formation process. An initiative which has been in development by CIOFS since the General Chapter in 2002 and again affirmed by the General Chapter of 2008.

I think we need to agree, and I hope all do, that our Franciscan Charism, theology, tradition and spirituality, OUR UNIQUE image and longing for relationship with God and all creation provides an essential savor to the Church. A distinct ingredient without which the Church and our world would be diminished. Sure all Spiritualities provide a distinct flavor and enticement for individuals to draw closer to God and to live more Gospel oriented lives. All have an honored place in the Church, all are necessary, but they are different. We are looking to enhance and preserve what is uniquely ours to be.

Franciscans cannot help but to be joy-filled and joyful because our vision of our God as Lover and Loving Father can produce nothing less than abundance of Joy. This is the essence of our Franciscan Heritage, to be joyful and to exude this joy simply because of our relationship with Love itself.

BUT, what if this flavor was in danger of going flat or more realistically absorbed into or muddled by other ingredients, would the soup be as flavorful if it (we) could no longer be tasted? (sorry, yes I cook some).

This is the driving factor in our revamping the whole initial formation process. We hope to help true vocations to the Franciscan Family flourish and for those who are good prayerful people, but who don't share the essence that makes us – US, find their own distinct expression of spirituality.

That said, here is the kicker, this “new” formation is actually “old” formation. We are not inventing something new, but in essence we are just adding some meat to the bones you are all familiar with, “*The Guidelines for Initial Formation*” promulgated by NAFRA (via CIOFS) back in 1985.

Allow me to do a quick side by side to explain better.

I hope this chart will give you some understanding that the new materials being released, beginning at the May 2011 National Formation Workshop, are aimed at giving all our formation people greater depth of understanding of our Charism and an easier method to use the specific topics called for in our existing Formation Guidelines

Bob Fitzsimmons, SFO
National Formation Commission

Guidelines for Initial Formation
Approved October 1985 Ref: pp 25-35, 39

Orientation

Determine basic disposition to Franciscan
Charism & life in fraternity:

Content:

Overview of life of Francis
Branches of Franciscan Family
The SFO
Phases of Formation & expectations
Review Catholic Doctrine

Inquiry

1st Phase of Initial Formation begins more in-
depth process of identifying and discerning
vocation

Content

The Church & Vatican 2
Lay Spirituality
Life of St. Francis
History of the SFO
Structure of the SFO
Ritual of the SFO

Candidacy – preparation to embrace vocation and
make permanent Profession (consecrated life)

Content:

Pauline Rule & Prologue
Sacred Scripture
Franciscan Spirituality
Trinitarian & Christo-centric
Franciscan Apostolic Life
Ritual

Forming the Formators
Core Topics 2010 (based on CIOFS)
C=CIOFS core topic

Orientation

(may require additional study in an RCIA style
program before entering Inquiry)

Content:

*The Franciscan Movement &
The Franciscan Family* [C]
The Creed [C]
Ecclesiology of the Laity [C]

Inquiry – suggest reading a bio of St Francis

Content:

What is formation [C]
Scripture & Basic Christian Doctrine [C]
Vocation & discernment [C]
Charism of founder & mission in the Church
[C]
Nature of the SFO [C]
Identity of a Secular Franciscan
Franciscan Movement 2
Discuss insights from a bio of Francis

Candidacy

Content:

Our Rule (3 sessions)
JPIC (1or 2 sessions)
Conversion – penitential movement [C]
Francis approach to God [C]
PROFESSION (2 sessions) [C]
Franciscan Tradition & Spirituality
Fraternity [C]
Francis & Blessed Mother
St. Clare
History of SFO [C]
GC & Statutes—study guides available at
www.nafraformation.org

NB – topics in italics are still being written