



What is Secular Franciscan Formation?

- Formation is a 're-founding' of our life according to the call to live 'the gospel life' in the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare
- Formation is a lifelong commitment to conversion
- Formation is centered upon the person of Christ Himself
- Formation is more than sharing information. Formation must transform our lives to reflect *Gospel values, attitudes and perspectives*

Basic Roles of Formation

- to bring the person to a fuller 'realization of his/her human and Christian development'
- to deepen the person's faith so that enlivened by the Holy Spirit he/she may live in closer 'union with the Father in Christ the Lord'
- to develop a understanding of the role that the OFS, and each Secular Franciscan, has in the Church and the Franciscan Family

True and authentic formation involves radical, interior change!



THE RITES OF ADMISSION AND PROFESSION

Our Commitment in the
OFS

The Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order – Who are we? (Section 1)

- *“Many men and women, married and single, and many members of the diocesan clergy are called by God to follow the way of perfection of the gospel life after the example and manner of Francis of Assisi, to share his charism, and to make it present in the world. They promise to follow Jesus Christ and to live the gospel in fraternity by entering the Secular Franciscan Order. In this way they manifest the priceless gift of Baptism and realize it in a fuller and more fruitful way.”*

Diane F. Menditto, OFS 10/28/21

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The first paragraph of the preface to the 1985 Ritual lets us know right off the bat that we are dealing with a very important document. The Ceremonies and Rites contained in the Ritual tell us who we are as Secular Franciscans through our actions and promises. Understanding the ceremonies and rites (before we make our life-long promises) is of equal (maybe greater) importance to all the things we learn in initial formation.

OFS Rites signify and effect the desire to become a member of the order and to make a permanent commitment to the Gospel Life. Particularly—

- ✓ Rite of Admission
- ✓ Rite of Profession

Justin Carisio, OFS and Layna Maher, OFS (NFC)

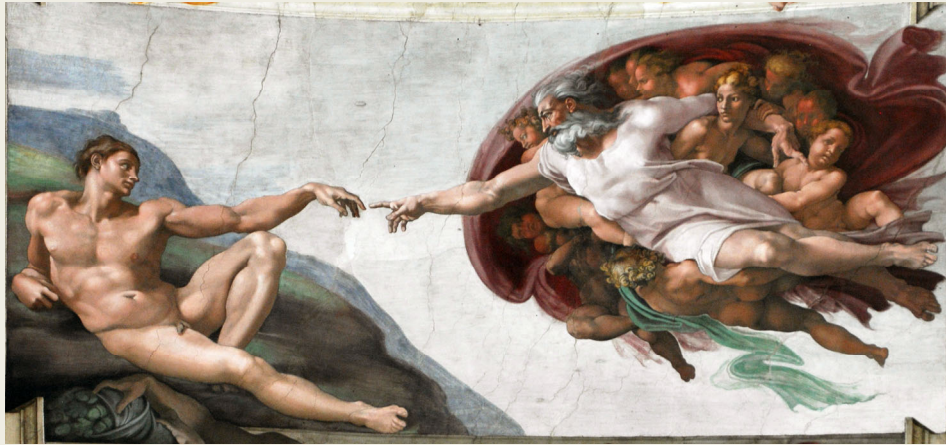
The rites celebrated in the formation of a Secular Franciscan signify the desire to become a member of the order and to make a permanent commitment to the Gospel life.

- **The Rite of Admission, is the moment when we become members of the order—We are attached to the Order although we have not yet made a permanent commitment. We wear the TAU and may write OFS after our name.**
- **With the Rite of Profession, we make our perpetual (life-long) commitment to live the Gospel life according to our Rule**
- **Profession does not make us Secular Franciscans—it celebrates the commitment we make to live the Gospel life.**

The celebration of Profession testifies to all of this, because it is God's action and a saving event: it is a moment when salvation reaches the faithful:

- 1. enabling them to make a promise to live the Franciscan gospel life and**
- 2. producing in them particular effects of grace, by which they are called to specific tasks within the People of God.**

Rites strengthen our union with God



Justin Carisio, OFS and Layna Maher, OFS (NFC)

“This aspect [the Rite of Profession] is by no means insignificant, because the celebration constitutes the foundational moment of the identity of the professed, and is simultaneously the condition for a dialogue to take place in response to God’s action. In fact, the consequences of the commitment a human being expressed by means of a promise derive from a prior commitment, that of God to man.” (Br. Felice Cangelosi OFM Cap)

A rite represents an ecclesiastical tradition about how the sacraments are to be celebrated. **Rites are an intensification; they serve to strengthen the union of God and humankind.** Rites are entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of St. Peter in the Primacy. **Certain words cannot be changed.**

A Rite is not about ceremony or looking good. The true meaning is about giving ourselves to God. We are called to bring God alive in who we are and how we live.

Who We Are

Our Franciscan Identity and Heritage

The Rite of Admission begins with the Inquirers asking to enter the Secular Franciscan Order so that they may live more intensely and faithfully the grace of their Baptism. They seek to follow Jesus according to the teaching and example of St Francis and to be of service to all, as a secular person, for the glory of God.

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, NFC

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ADMISSION

I ask to enter this fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, so that I may live more intensely and faithfully the grace and dedication of my Baptism by following Jesus Christ according to the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. In this way I intend to be of service to all through my secular state of life for the glory of God and to fulfill his plan of love on behalf of all people.

Minister-perhaps with some appropriate gesture-says:

This fraternity is pleased to accept your request. I, therefore, receive you into the Secular Franciscan Order so that you may begin your time of formation and experience our Franciscan life in preparation for your permanent commitment.³

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Why We Gather

Life in fraternity and Sense of belonging

An example of why we gather in fraternity is found at the end of the Rite of Admission.

The minister says to the new candidates:

... [this] Secular Franciscan Fraternity... very gladly promises to help you in your journey with friendship, prayer and the witness of its life.

You, on the other hand, strengthen our fraternity in numbers, by virtue of your presence and participation, and through the sharing of your special gifts. You are most welcome!

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, NFC

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1. The fraternity promises to support the candidates on their journey.
2. The fraternity also expects the candidates to enrich the fraternity.
3. That's what it means to belong! Mutual love and support.

Who We Are Our Franciscan Identity and Heritage

In the Rite of Profession, the candidates ask:

...to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life.

By faithfully living the articles of the Rule, they clothe themselves with our Franciscan identity and make it visible to the Church and to the world.

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, NFC

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PROFESSION

“Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which are at the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?”

“You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the gospel, together with all people of goodwill.

Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?”

“Do you wish to bind yourself more closely to the Church and to work intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfill its mission among all people?”

I, _____ by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom. Therefore, in my secular state, I promise to live all the days of my life the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Secular Franciscan Order. May the grace of the Holy Spirit, the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and our holy father St. Francis, and the fraternal bonds of community always be my help, so that I may reach the goal of perfect Christian love.

Symbols and Gifts

At the Ceremony of Welcoming	At the Rite of Admission	At the Rite of Profession
Biography of Saint Francis and <i>[in some cases]</i> Saint Clare Aspirants introduce themselves	The Rule of Life The TAU Cross	The Holy Gospels, <i>[and where customary]</i> San Damiano Crucifix, a profession Candle, and/or Ring

Anne Mulqueen, OFS, NFC

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It is also important to focus on the role of **symbols and gifts** in the ceremony of welcoming and in the Rites of Admission and Profession.

In each category we find

What we Internalize: the life of St. Francis; our Rule of Life; the Holy Gospels

Symbolic actions and gifts:

- We begin to get to know the aspirants through their introduction;
- the TAU cross is the sign of our Order in the United States and in many parts of the world because it was so important in Scripture and to St. Francis.
- A San Damiano Cross representing the humble Christ who spoke to St. Francis;
- the profession candle representing the light of Christ (recalling the baptismal candle);
- possibly a ring symbolizing eternal commitment.

Points to Remember

- † The rites and prayers in the Ritual are meant to be celebrated publicly in the midst of the fraternity. They are not composed to be private devotionals, although they do contain words of wisdom and spiritual depth.
- † Advance preparation and focused intention are vital for the celebrations to be meaningful.
- † When we gather for these occasions, everyone is expected to be a participant. No one is a spectator.
- † The most important point to remember is that when we gather, we are in the presence of **GOD**.

For Discussion: Based on the Rites

T +Key Learnings: For you, what are the four most outstanding parts of the Rites of Admission and Profession?

T +Understanding our Promises: What are you asked to promise that might present a challenge to you? Give an example and tell why it is challenging.

T +Conversion: The Holy Spirit speaks to each of us in a very personal way. As you read the Rites of Admission and Profession, how did they touch and change you and bring you closer to God? Give examples.

+Discernment: *The Rites do not transform us into Franciscans. They celebrate the change that has already taken place in you throughout your discernment. We are celebrating the fact that God has called you from the time of your Baptism to live out your life as a Catholic and as a Franciscan. God delights in our acts of love for him. He calls us first. The Holy Spirit has planted the seed of our vocation in us from the very beginning.*

Give an example of how this is taking place in you already.

+Key Takeaways: Please list three key takeaways to living as a Franciscan that the promises you make (made) during these Rites will help you to achieve.

A Prayer For Spiritual Growth

Gracious and loving God,
I praise you for the gift of this good day,
And I pray that I use this gift
To learn to love You more.

Help me to advance
In the journey of spiritual growth.
Lead me to look for You, and find You
In the service of my sisters and brothers.

Gift me with the eyes of faith
So that in every experience of joy and sorrow,
I will recognize Your presence, and discover Your tenderness.

I re-dedicate myself to my Baptismal vows,
As I strive to live a Gospel-centered life,
Open and obedient to Your voice,
Willing to embrace whatever You ask of me.

Nourished by prayer,
And strengthened by Your grace,
May seeds of holiness, wisdom and charity
Take root and flower forth
In my life-long song of glory and honor
To You, my Lord and my God. AMEN.