

A Companion Document to the CIOFS Thematic Guide for OFS Formation Programs

Introduction and How to Use this Document

The CIOFS Thematic Guide for OFS Formation Programs is divided into three sections: (1) the time of Initiation; (2) the time of Formation; and (3) Ongoing Formation. For each of these particular periods of formation, the CIOFS Secretariat for Formation suggests Objectives, Methods, and an Introduction. Following those sections of the document, the Contents of each period of formation addresses: (1) the Human Dimension; (2) the Christian Dimension; and (3) the Franciscan Dimension.

Members of the National Formation Commission have proposed ideas about particular Activities that the formators in Canadian fraternities might adopt to animate the CIOFS Guide for Formation in OFS fraternities. In addition, the Commission has developed a “curated, annotated” list of Resources for formators and fraternities. Please note: this list is not all-inclusive. Rather, the Commission attempted to propose a selection of excellent resources that are currently available either online or through Franciscan publishers.

This companion document is meant to be used hand-in-hand with the CIOFS Thematic Guide for OFS Formation Programs. We hope and pray that this document will help formators animate and enliven fraternity life in the Secular Franciscan Order throughout Canada.

We would suggest that the 800th Centenary celebrations should be a Formation focus for the next few years as we celebrate the Stigmata (2024), Canticle of the Creatures (2025) and the Easter of St. Francis (2026)

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PART I: Activities

Time of Initiation

A period of time when members of the fraternity are asked to accompany and encourage a person who is exploring a call to the Secular Franciscan Order. The content of formation during this period should include developing an understanding of the Franciscan charism, as well as highlighting the unity that makes us a spiritual family in the Church.

Methods to accomplish the above include helping the person to effectively participate in the life of the fraternity and to attend dedicated formation sessions using different methods. Please remember that some people learn by doing, others by listening, and still others by speaking... so we should try to accommodate all styles of learning during formation sessions!

Human Dimension

Include the person in fraternity activities and specific projects such as the Christmas Family Initiatives and Coats for Kids projects.

Invite the person to help with everyday tasks at fraternity meetings, such as helping to set up chairs, or helping to set out the lunch or serve coffee and tea.

Engage in initial correspondence with the person asking questions like: "Why do you wish to become a member of the Secular Franciscan Order?" "What kind of involvement do you have in your parish, family?" A request for a reference from the parish priest and a friend is also beneficial in helping the formation team determine the suitability of a person seeking to be involved with the fraternity.

Have a personal meeting between the fraternity formation director and the interested person to help discern that person's knowledge and desire to follow a Franciscan path. Many fraternities expect persons who are exploring the Secular Franciscan Order to attend a number of fraternity meetings (often 3-6 meetings) before they enter a formal formation program.

For formators: reviewing the information on Initiation in the *Thematic Guide* could be very helpful in developing a program for people at this stage.

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Christian Dimension

Help the person recognize the role of the word of God in our Franciscan fraternity life. Those beginning Initiation could be exposed to different forms of prayer, such as Franciscan Praise (Liturgy of the Hours) and Lectio Divina. Explore our relationship with Jesus, the Holy Trinity, Mary. These could be addressed by having short presentations followed by discussion so the person in initiation could learn how Franciscans develop their relationship with Jesus, the Holy Trinity, and Mary.

Franciscan Dimension

The person in Initiation stage could be introduced to the life, vocation, spirituality and mission of St. Francis and St. Clare through books, discussions, presentations. The role played by the fraternity in the life of a Secular Franciscan... this could be continually stressed in formation meetings by giving examples drawn from the fraternity meetings.

The apostolic and social dimension of the Franciscan charism: Activities could include collecting and donating warm clothes for those in need in the wintertime, learning how to recycle material to reduce waste, and (perhaps) learning to make eye contact and speaking to a street person in our own area.

The person in Initiation would benefit from understanding the different milestones and meaning of the stages of formation in the Secular Formation Order.

The Time of Formation

This is a time when the formator guides candidates to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, to come to know and appreciate the person and writings of St. Francis and St. Clare, and of Franciscan spirituality, and to study the Rule and the Constitutions.

Methods to help candidates include having dedicated formation sessions on a regular basis, using a variety of methods. These would include: presentations, dialogue, collaborative group work, use of online resources (see resources section of this document), viewing videos, listening to podcasts, reading books. Use the method *See/Listen—Discern—Act—Celebrate* when developing materials for formation. Ensure that the candidates have concrete experiences about applying the Franciscan charism to their own lives.

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Human Dimension

Help candidates deepen their relationships: with themselves, with family members, with colleagues in the workplace or with neighbours at home. This is a time when candidates can focus on deepening their relationships with members of the fraternity. Candidates may also establish a relationship with those who are poor and marginalized, as they adopt a Franciscan spirit of appreciation for all members of God's creation.

Christian Dimension

During the period of formation, candidates should be helped to foster and deepen their commitment to the Sacraments and to their own prayer life. This might include more frequent attendance at Mass and the Sacraments. It might also include "trying on" a variety of different forms of prayer such as Adoration, Lectio Divina, Liturgy of the Hours.

Invite guest speakers from the Parish ministries or from the community to give a talk.

Franciscan Dimension

Present the Articles of the Secular Franciscan Rule and of the General Constitutions to the candidates. Work together to discuss how people could try/are trying to implement these in their lives- include real-life examples.

Introduce the candidates to a variety of different resources that they might read, watch online, or listen to. A wide variety of videos are easily accessed via Youtube.com. Here are several that are available: Meditation to St. Francis of Assisi (18 minutes), St. Francis- Stories of the Saints (18 minutes long), 7 Things You Need to Know about St. Clare of Assisi (3:53 minutes) and Clare- the Little Flower of Assisi (2:59). Many others are also available.

Time of Ongoing Formation

Begun in the time of Initiation and Candidacy the brothers and sisters take their place in a permanent and continuous way in the life of the fraternity. The fraternity has the duty to give attention to aid in the conversion of each member and to help them become fully mature in their vocation and to develop a true sense of belonging to a Franciscan family. Francis wished that his whole life would point to Christ.

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Methods to accomplish this include full participation in meetings and Chapters at the Local, Regional, National, and International level. Concrete experiences should include retreats, courses, videos, podcasts, online meetings, and resources available through the CIOFS site. There are numerous resources available. Ongoing formation needs to strengthen the vocation of the professed by following the spirituality and writings of St. Francis and St. Clare and develop a deeper knowledge of the Rule and Constitution.

Human Dimension

Ongoing formation is a time to focus, through Servant Leadership on the health of the fraternity, the health of our families and the health of our natural world. Using St. Francis as our guide we are called to go and “rebuild the Church.” This is a broad scope of undertakings, respect for life and for nature, healing material and spiritual poverties, youth to love, support to our Christian communities etc. Francis presented us with an example, a moving and inspiring example, but the tradition does not end with him. In his words, “I have done what is mine to do, may Christ now show you what is yours.”

Christian Dimension

“ Gospel to life and life to Gospel,” our guide to following Christ. Franciscans need to meditate on the words of Scripture. Franciscans should familiarize themselves with Catholic social teachings and Church documents. Participation in celebrations such as the Transitus, Professions and Franciscan feast days should be encouraged. Use of the Examination of Conscience based on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and the Church’s Social Teaching is another valuable tool.

Franciscan Dimension

Ongoing formation should include a deeper knowledge of the writings of St. Clare and St. Francis and other Franciscan saints. All Secular Franciscans are responsible to animate and guide their local fraternities. From the local fraternity comes our leaders at the Regional, National, and International levels. Retreats and visits with members of the First and Second Orders of the Franciscan family will enhance our bond as a Franciscan Family within the Catholic Church.

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In Conclusion

Keeping in mind that this Guide was a worldwide collaboration, your National Formation Commission has tried to provide some Canadian resources for your use. Along with what we have presented, we are sure that your local fraternities already have in place material that you are using and is feeding your fraternal members.

Taken from the “Care and Feeding of Fraternity Councils” please keep in mind,

“ Our Profession requires an understanding of being in an Order within the Church; we have consecrated ourselves and our lives to God. As professed members of the Franciscan Family, we also have entered into a life-long journey to transform ourselves into better images of Christ, ongoing formation is a key component and active participation in the process is a requirement of profession.”

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PART II: Resources for OFS Fraternities in Canada

Books

Francis, the Journey and the Dream: 40th Anniversary Edition by Murray Bodo OFM (2011).
Published by Franciscan Media.

Comments by Margaret Carney OSF about *The Journey and the Dream*: “Words, images, intuitions about Francesco so artfully assembled that thousands have breathed the pine-scented Umbrian air and glimpsed—however fleetingly—the sun-drenched horizons of the soul’s longing.”

Franciscan Prayer by Ilia Delio (2004) Published by Franciscan Media.

In this book, Franciscan theologian Ilia Delio “Clearly outlines what it means to pray as a Franciscan...It is through Clare of Assisi that we have insights into the Franciscan path of prayer...through Clare’s letters and actions, we find the rudiments of Franciscan prayer ‘Gaze- Consider- Contemplate- Imitate”

Dating God: Live and Love in the Way of St. Francis by Dan Horan OFM (2012) Published by (St. Anthony Messenger Press) Now known as Franciscan Media

“The primary question that guides this book is: How can I know and love God today? This question will serve as our starting point on a journey toward God. This book is a reflection on how to relate to God and one another in our contemporary setting... it offers a new look at the timeless condition of human longing for a deeper relationship with the Creator”.
(Introduction)

St Clare of Assisi - Light from the Cloister by Bret Thoman, OFS (2017) Published by TAN Books

Bret Thoman “draws upon his ... knowledge of original sources, his familiarity with the places where this great founder lived and breathed and changed the world, and his own Franciscan spirituality, to bring to life... the story of St. Clare of Assisi.”

St Francis of Assisi: Passion, Poverty and the Man Who Transformed the Catholic Church by Bret Thoman OFS (2016) Published by TAN Books

“In this riveting biography, author Bret Thoman ... pierces the inner life of Francis, revealing his deepest passions, his unquenchable love for poverty, and his unshakable grip on the core of the Gospel. The life of Francis, so often festooned with spectacle and miracle, is in reality the story of a soul yearning for God in every moment and glimpsing His presence in all creation.”

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The People of the Towel and Water by Catherine Doherty (1896-1985) First published in 1980 Catherine draws you into the spirituality of Gospel living and applies her own insights into the tasks of every day living.

The Light of Assisi: The Story of St. Clare by Margaret Carney OSF (2021) Published by Franciscan Media

“The purpose of this book is simple: to introduce St. Clare of Assisi to those who do not know her and those who wish to know her better ... The book works to weave the threads of Clare’s story with that of Francis, but it also gives due importance to the long stretch of years that followed his death—years in which Clare’s position in the Franciscan world was of great significance.”

Praying the Secular Franciscan Rule by Luke Amato

Various Franciscan books offered by Murray Bodo and Ilia Delio

Books by Canadian Authors

Franciscan Footprints by Gloria Pearson Vasey, OFS (2012) The author is a member of ? Fraternity in Ontario.

“This book is a collection of spiritual reflections and inspirational stories in two “books.” Book I consist of word images and photography derived from a pilgrimage to Assisi and the surrounding caves, cloisters and countryside once frequented by Francis of Assisi. An Appendix contains original journal notations by some of the pilgrims. Book II is a collection of brief biographies of sixteen Secular Franciscans demonstrating how they have achieved serenity in their lives despite difficulties and sufferings.”

Formation Texts

Franciscan Virtues through the Year: 52 steps to conversion from St. Francis of Assisi, by members of the Confraternity of Penitents (2016)

This text lists 52 Franciscan virtues in individual chapters. Each chapter “explores each virtue with a quote from Scripture, a quote from the writings of Saint Francis, and an incident from the life of Saint Francis... Then a reflection on the virtue, meditation and prayer on the virtue, and some delving back into Scripture follow.”

The Franciscan Journey: Embracing the Franciscan vision by Fr. Lester Bach OFM cap (2010)
This formation text includes 33 chapters that allow participants to move from *Orientation*

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through *Inquiry* and into *Candidacy*. The chapters that are read during candidacy are all based on individual Articles (1-26) of the OFS Rule.

From Gospel to Life: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order with commentary by Benet Fonck

To Set Themselves Free: A Continuous Guide to the Life and Rule of the Secular Franciscans by Teresa Baker OFS (2005). Publisher: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises.

In this text, Teresa Baker devotes one chapter to each of the Articles of the Secular Franciscan Rule (1978). The author offers a Franciscan focus for each chapter, with Reflection Questions, and at the end of the chapter, with Integration and Decision Questions for both Initial and Ongoing Formation.

Workbooks

Listening to Indigenous Voices: A Dialogue Guide on Justice and Right Relationships published by the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice

Listening to Indigenous Voices introduces participants to Indigenous perspectives on history, draws out the wisdom of Indigenous traditions and points us to a new way of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people walking together.

On Care for Our Common Home: A dialogue guide for Laudato Si' published by the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Action.

In the resource, *On Care for Our Common Home*, the Jesuit Forum “facilitates a thorough study of ...the encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si': On care for our common home*. When people talk to one another, they listen to what others think and they speak about what they understand and believe. Minds and hearts are opened – the world is made a better place.” (p. iii)

Websites

Canadian OFS National Fraternity Website

<https://www.ofscanada.ca/>

This site is the website for the Canadian National OFS Fraternity. It is available in both English and French and provides information on the current National Fraternity Council with its

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constituent teams. It also is the site where *Living Fraternity* (the Canadian national formation program) may be accessed. This website also provides information on Canadian Regional Fraternities, on CIOFS (the International OFS Fraternity), Franciscan spirituality and prayer.

COUNCIL OF THE INTERNATIONAL SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER (CIOFS)

<https://ciofs.info>

Communication and circulars from the OFS International Fraternity.

Contains essential documents including the Rule, formation resources including the OFS Rule, General Constitutions, Ritual, International Statutes in many languages.

KOINONIA - Resources for ongoing formation of Spiritual Assistants to the OFS for the laity and religious.

YouFRA - Resources on Formation of Franciscan Youth (children and adolescents)

FRANCISCAN TRADITION

<http://franciscantradition.org/early-sources>

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

<https://www.cccb.ca/>

This website provides a wide range of documents of Catholic Church teachings. It includes the daily readings for Mass at: <https://readings.livingwithchrist.ca/daily-texts/gospel/2024-01-19> It has a large section of books and documents for sale (over 500 articles and many in French).

It also has a page dedicated to Canadian saints and blessed men and women at:

<https://www.cccb.ca/the-catholic-church-in-canada/saints-blesseds-canada/>

An Examination of Conscience based on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and the Church's Social Teaching

Franciscan Voice Canada

<https://www.franciscanvoiccanada.com/>

The **Franciscan Voice Canada** (FVC) website was a Justice, Peace, and Integrity initiative of the National JPIC Commission (English Sector) of the National Fraternity of Canada. The editors

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ensure content is in accord with Catholic Social Doctrine especially the encyclical *Laudato Si'*, the OFS Rule, General Constitutions & National Statutes of Canada; as well as the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops JPIC initiatives.

Living Fraternity

<https://www.ofscanada.ca/living-fraternity.html>

Living Fraternity is a Canadian ongoing formation program that has been developed for Secular Franciscan members in Canada. It has been published monthly since 2014, addresses a wide range of topics of interest to Secular Franciscans, and is available for download from the Canadian National Fraternity website. Each month's edition is about 4 pages long and is posted in both French and English.

Living Out Laudato Si' from the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops

https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/images/stories/pdf/Living_Out_Laudato_Si_En.pdf

This book is available for free download or for purchase. It includes Reflection Questions and Resources for each of the 6 chapters: 1. What is Happening to our Common Home, 2. The Gospel of Creation, 3. The Human Roots of the Ecological Crises, 4. Integral Ecology, 5. Lines of Approach and Action, and 6. Ecological Education and Spirituality. The learning approach is based on See, Learn, Pray, Act.

Movies, Videos, Music, and You tube

Movie: *The Pivotal Players* by Bishop Robert Barron, The Life of St. Francis of Assisi

Franciscans Sing: a musical album featuring our own Canadian Secular Franciscans, Colleen MacAlister, Denis Grady, Doug, and Marion Clorey

Canadian singer Sarah McLachlan sings ***Prayer of St. Francis***

Friar Alessandro sings – available on You tube

Various short videos available on you tube about St. Francis and St. Clare

Publishers/Bookstores Carrying Franciscan Materials

Franciscan Media

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www.FranciscanMedia.org

Tau Publishing

<https://taupublishing.com/>

Offers books of interest to Secular Franciscans.

Smoky Valley Printing

Many important Secular Franciscan books, manuals, and documents are available via mail/phone order from Smoky Valley Printing

PO Box 189, Lindsborg, KS 67456

785.227.2364 or svprinting2364@gmail.com

Veritas Catholic Bookstore: Catholic books and gifts

<https://www.veritasbookstore>

Church Documents

Papal encyclicals and documents may be found on the Vatican website.

<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals.index.html>

Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)

Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home

Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship

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