

# **A Companion Document for Canadian Secular Franciscans 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 believe that this document will help formators animate and enliven fraternity life in the Secular Franciscan Order throughout Canada.

We would suggest that the 800<sup>th</sup> 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).

Produced by the OFS National Formation Commission of Canada  
May 4, 2024

**Part I: Activities**

**The 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. 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 the 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 social justice 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.

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### 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.

#### *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 Contemplation, Meditation, Lectio Divina, Liturgy of the Hours and Adoration.

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. Collectively 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 can be accessed via YouTube.com, such as Meditation to St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis- Stories of the Saints, 7 Things You Need to Know about St. Clare of Assisi, and Clare- the Little Flower of Assisi. Many others are also available.

### Notes

## **Time of Ongoing Formation**

Beginning with 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 aid in the daily conversion of each member, to help them become fully mature in their vocation, and to develop a true sense of belonging to a Franciscan family.

Methods to accomplish this include participating in meetings and chapters at Local, Regional, National, and International levels. Concrete experiences can include retreats, courses, videos, podcasts, online meetings, and resources available through the CIOFS site, the OFS Canada site, and different OFS Regional sites. (See the addresses for these sites in the Websites section of Resources). Ongoing formation also strengthens the vocation of the professed by focusing on the spirituality and writings of St. Francis and St. Clare, and continually developing a deeper knowledge of the OFS Rule and General Constitutions.

### *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, including respect for life and for nature, healing material and spiritual poverties, providing support to our Christian communities and so on. 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,” is frequently cited as our guide to following Christ. Secular Franciscans should meditate on the words of Scripture. We should familiarize ourselves with Catholic social teachings and Church documents. Use of the Examination of Conscience based on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and the Church’s Social Teaching is another potentially valuable tool.

### *Franciscan Dimension:*

Ongoing formation should help members develop 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. Our leaders at the Regional, National, and International levels come from the local fraternities. 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. Participating in celebrations such as the Transitus, Professions and Franciscan feast days should always be encouraged.

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### **In Conclusion**

The CIOFS Thematic Guide for OFS Formation Programs was a collaborative effort for Secular Franciscans worldwide. Therefore, your Canadian National Formation Commission has provided some thoughts, ideas and resources with a Canadian flavour for your use. In addition to what we have presented here, we know that your local fraternities have in place many materials that you are using to provide formation for your fraternity members. Please feel free to share excellent materials that you find with the National Formation Commission and other OFS fraternities!

We also propose that as you minister in the important area of Formation, please keep in mind that:

“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.”

From *The Care and Feeding of Fraternity Councils* (2011, p.12)

### **Notes:**

## PART II: Resources for OFS Fraternities in Canada

### Books

*Francis, the Journey and the Dream: 40<sup>th</sup> 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”. (from the 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 de Hueck Doherty (2010).

Current Publisher: Madonna House Publications, 2010. Original Publisher: Dimension Books, 1980.

“Catherine Doherty, the founder of Madonna House, draws you into the spirituality of Gospel living and applies her own insights into the tasks of everyday 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 OFS (2010).

Published by Lulu.com (2018).

“This book is for all those attracted to the way St. Francis & St. Clare of Assisi followed Jesus. All of us are called to make the Gospel an integral part of our lives, going from Gospel to Life and from Life to Gospel. Our Rule incorporates the very essence of the Gospel itself”.

### Books by Canadian Authors

*Franciscan Footprints* by Gloria Pearson Vasey, OFS (2012).

Published by Red Apple Publishing (2015).

“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.”

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### Formation Texts

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

Published by Confraternity of Penitents

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)

Published by National Fraternity of the OFS in the USA

This formation text includes 33 chapters that allow participants to move from *Orientation* through *Inquiry* and into *Candidacy*. The chapters that are read during candidacy are all based on individual Articles (1-26) of the OFS Rule.

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

Published by 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, there are Integration and Decision Questions for both Initial and Ongoing Formation.

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

Available at Smoky Valley Printing

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### Workbooks

#### *Listening to Indigenous Voices: A Dialogue Guide on Justice and Right Relationships*

Published by the Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice

This workbook introduces readers 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 Justice

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)

#### Notes:

### 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 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>

The site contains a wealth of information in four languages including communication and circulars from the OFS International Fraternity. It contains essential documents for the OFS and many formation resources including the OFS Rule, General Constitutions, Ritual, and the International Statutes in many languages.

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

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

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*Franciscan Tradition: Commission on the Intellectual-Spiritual Tradition*

<https://www.franciscantradition.org/about>

A compendium of many Franciscan writings, including the early writings of Francis and Clare (You can explore these writings under “Digital Collections”)

*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/>

*Franciscan Voice Canada*

<https://www.franciscanvoicecanada.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 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 an 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 current 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](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.

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### Music and Videos

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

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkk-L7Fbj6Q&list=OLAK5uy\\_kPn\\_pj1W8JqlfqGVAyeF0XlyEGHs\\_JEzw&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkk-L7Fbj6Q&list=OLAK5uy_kPn_pj1W8JqlfqGVAyeF0XlyEGHs_JEzw&index=2)

*Friar Alessandro*– Franciscan friar sings spiritual music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xZRnLkWqmso> (Ave Maria)

*Prayer of St. Francis* by Sarah McLachlan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agPnMxp5Occ>

*St. Francis of Assisi- Catholicism- The Pivotal Players* movie by Bishop Robert Barron.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M8VMI81JxMs> (Preview)

### Publishers/Bookstores Carrying Franciscan Materials

*Franciscan Media*

[www.FranciscanMedia.org](http://www.FranciscanMedia.org)

*Tau Publishing*

<https://taupublishing.com/>

*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](mailto: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. Pope Francis' writings provided here:

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

*Fratelli Tutti: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*

*Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*

*Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel)*