

Formation at Fraternity Gatherings/Meetings

According to the *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*, Leader Guide 12, there are four essential elements to each and every Fraternity Gathering/Meeting. The first mentioned is **Prayer**; this is in addition to the Opening and Closing Prayers for Fraternity Meetings, p. 35 – 37 or Prayer for the Regular Meeting of the Council, p. 38 – 40 (*The Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*). The second element is **Ongoing Formation**. A third element is keeping **Business** matters to a minimum and the fourth is **Social Time**.

Our Gatherings/Meetings should be at least 2 to 3 hours in length and contain the four elements mentioned above. One prayer form is the *Liturgy of the Hours* which could be prayed at the beginning of the Gathering/Meeting or at the end. Other possibilities could include someone from the Fraternity reading or providing a Meditation or a Reflection, or having spontaneous prayer, and the list can continue. The Fraternity could also do particular prayers for specific times of the year. For example: *Stations of the Cross* and/or *The Office of the Passion* during Lent; *Transitus* during October for Francis and in August for Clare; *Franciscan Crown Rosary* during May and/or October; Thanksgiving prayer/litany during November; Crèche prayer service in December, etc. Note, *The Office of the Passion* can be prayed throughout the year.

The Ongoing Formation segment could be divided into four prongs: teaching about the **Catholic**



Church (teachings about our Faith); **Franciscan Emphasis** (e.g., *The Rule*; *General Constitutions*; *National Statutes*; *Legend of the Three Companions*; books about Saints: Francis, Clare, Bonaventure, John Duns Scotus, etc.; Franciscan Spirituality; Franciscan calendar themes: Blessed Virgin Mary, Portiuncula, Crèche, TAU, Stigmata; etc.; articles from Regional Newsletter, *The Portiuncula* and our National Newsletter, *TAU-USA*; and the list goes on and on!); **Contemporary topics** and how we live out

our vocations as Secular Franciscans [e.g., *Laudato Si'*; Works of Mercy; *Amoris Laetitia*, etc.]; and **Prayer** as referenced in the paragraph above. It is easy to see how ongoing formation could take 1 to 2 hours. [For further details, see the file titled: *Four-Pronged Approach to Ongoing Formation*.]

Don't feel that silence is terrible. The introverts in the Fraternity need some time to think before answering. Give a lot of positive reinforcement when people do share their observations. Remember, we are trying to be good servant leaders and our *Rule* of Life, article #21 states, "each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister." The wonderful fact is that when working with a Formation Team, the responsibility rests upon others and not just on the Formation Director. Formation **MUST** be covered, but the Formation Director **DOESN'T** have to do everything!

Business could be 10 to 15 minutes and it may be good to put this element at the end of the Gathering/Meeting because people seem to stay around for Fraternity business discussions and input.

Social Time needs to occur some time during the Gathering/Meeting. The Fraternity may want to begin with a Social, or put it in the middle of the ongoing formation time or close to the end. This can be determined collaboratively with all the members of the Fraternity.