Formation for Those in Initial Formation

1. Those in Initial Formation (Aspirants, Inquirers and Candidates) should meet once or twice monthly for at least 1 to 2 hours. This is in addition to participating in the Fraternity’s monthly Gatherings/Meetings which include ongoing formation for everyone. It is important that the Inquirers and Candidates attend Regional events whenever possible. This is a great aid in understanding the structure of the Order. (see, Structure of the Secular Franciscan Order, in the Regional Formation Resource Kit)

2. Working collaboratively with the Formation Team is imperative so that those in Initial Formation are developing relationships with members of the Fraternity. This means that different Team members can facilitate the Initial Formation sessions using the gifts and talents which God has given them. One of the Formation Director’s duties is to ensure that formation happens during the Initial Formation sessions, but he/she does not and probably should not be the only one facilitating/leading every session.

3. Always have a tentative plan for the Initial Formation process which has been discussed with the Formation Team and the Council. Do not be rigid in following the plan; there must always be room for the Holy Spirit to guide the process.

4. Utilize different teaching techniques:
   - Dialogue
   - Small group discussions
   - Questions and answers (Asking questions which solicit information and not questions which can be answered by simply saying yes or no.)
   - Asking those in Initial Formation to give personal examples of lived experiences on the topic being discussed, etc.

A very ineffective method is that of always giving a lecture! The goal of all formation is the interaction among all of the participants. No one person should be talking the majority of the time. All persons involved must be engaged in the process. Remember, everyone in the group has something to offer. The members of the Formation Team are FACILITATORS and not lecturers!

5. The methods used during the learning process should be varied:
   - PowerPoints, videos, DVDs, audiocassettes, YouTube, etc.
   - Discussions
   - Role-playing
   - Bringing in items to be shown, discussed, etc.

6. Always be aware that the Formation Team is assisting both the people in Initial Formation and the Fraternity Council to discern if God is calling those in Initial Formation to a vocation as a Secular Franciscan.
Outline of an Initial Formation Session

A. It is always a good idea to begin every session with Prayer. It is very appropriate to ask if anyone has a particular prayer intention he/she would like remembered during this prayer time.

Prayers which St. Francis authored are highly recommended, like the Prayer Before the Crucifix. Note: St. Francis did not author the Peace Prayer, but it does reflect Francis’ convictions.

B. Having those in Initial Formation engaged in the formation process is vital:
- Ask if there are any questions concerning the last session.
- Solicit any questions they may have about the Secular Franciscan Order.
- Invite them to share their faith journeys since the last time they were together.

C. Materials that should be covered during the Initial Formation process:
- A Biography of St. Francis
- The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order
- A Formation Text (e.g., The Franciscan Journey; Fully Mature with the Fullness of Christ, etc.)
- FUN Manual topics
- Materials from the Regional Formation Resource Kit (especially: Baptism; Discernment; Initial Formation topics; Relationships; Rite of Admission; Rite of Profession; Sponsor; Tau Cross)
- General Constitutions (as found in Essential Documents)
- National Statutes (as found in Essential Documents)

D. At the conclusion of the time together, end with Prayer. This is a great opportunity to present different prayer forms:
- Lectio Divina
- Meditation
- Franciscan Crown Rosary
- Liturgy of the Hours
- The Office of the Passion
- Guided Journey with Francis of Assisi (in the Regional Formation Resource Kit)