

PART TWO: PLANNING THE *RITE OF PROFESSION*

Three to four months before the Profession:

1. Decide where the *Rite of Profession* should take place. Note that the *Rite of Profession* is to be celebrated during the Mass in the presence of the fraternity (*Ritual, Preface 3.31*). It is preferable that the *Rite of Profession* occurs at a regularly scheduled Sunday Mass at the parish at which the fraternity meets or the Candidate's own parish. The Council could make the choice of another suitable place after consultation with the Spiritual Assistant. If you have any questions as to where the *Rite of Profession* should be celebrated, please consult the Regional Executive Council.

2. Make an appointment with the Pastor of the parish to discuss the *Rite of Profession*. When setting the appointment please provide him with a copy of the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* as well as the *Celebrant's Copy of Rite of Profession within the Mass* (cf. *Regional Formation Resource Kit; Rite of Profession*). The Celebrant's copy of the *Rite of Profession* should be printed in color and presented to him in a liturgically appropriate binder.

3. Prepare for the meeting with the Pastor by reviewing the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* and the Celebrant's copy of the *Rite of Profession* so you are very familiar with the Rite. Take these with you to the meeting. Your fraternity is encouraged to adapt the Rite as stated in the Preface of the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order*. Be aware that the presiding Celebrant has the ultimate authority to approve the Rite.

Regarding adaptation of the *Rite of Profession*

“A liturgical celebration expresses and brings about the most profound religious sentiments within a person. In an intense and concentrated moment the reality of one's faith-experience is made present. Hence, a good liturgical event presupposes dignity, order and reverence, on the one hand, and, on the other, the personal touch of sincerity and involvement” (*Ritual, Preface 4.01*).

“Except for the formula for profession or permanent commitment, which should be used basically in the form given, all the other formulae and prayers presented in the text are to be considered *models* to guide those planning the ceremonies in providing a ritual experience that is both common to the whole Secular Franciscan Order and suited to the local circumstances or to the particular people involved. The adaptation of the given texts is encouraged. To signify the importance and the personal character of the event, it is especially recommended that the inquirers and candidates formulate their own statements of intent for the Rite of Admission and the Rite of Profession respectively, in accord with the models presented” (*Ritual, Preface 4.21-4.22*).

4. At the meeting with the Pastor: Express your appreciation of the time constraints at a Sunday Mass, but explain in a respectful manner how easily the *Rite of Profession* can be celebrated within the Mass and how meaningful it can be for the assembly. Remember it is ultimately the Pastor's decision whether to allow the Rite to occur at a Sunday Liturgy. If the Pastor denies the request for a Sunday celebration, he may suggest a weekday Mass, or offer to celebrate a special Mass for this event. If this occurs you may want to return to the Fraternity Council for further discussion.
5. [A.] Set a date and time for the profession in consultation with the Pastor. It is very important to consider how much preparation is needed when setting the date. It is highly suggested that you set the date at least two months prior to the celebration.

[B.] Set a date and time for a rehearsal in consultation with the Celebrant. It is very important that all those who will participate in the Profession be present for the rehearsal. Those present at the rehearsal should include the following: Celebrant of the Mass, Fraternity Minister, Spiritual Assistant, Director of Formation, the Candidate(s), and the Witness(es). Be sure they know well in advance the date and time of the rehearsal. Keep in mind you will need to allow 45 minutes to an hour for the rehearsal.

Two months before Profession:

1. Fellowship and Social: Decide whether a reception, some kind of gathering, or a meal will be part of Profession Day. A social event is highly encouraged, but the planning and preparation should be delegated to other members of the fraternity.
2. Invitations to the Profession, and optional reception, are prepared to include all relevant information as time, date, place and Candidate(s) name(s) and sent out in a timely fashion. **Invitations should be sent to the Region and to the other fraternities in the region**, as well as to the friends and family members of the Candidate(s). You might also invite those who have been of special help to the Candidate – their own Pastor, Spiritual Director, Godparents, etc. Sending invitations to a profession ceremony is a wonderful way to promote the O.F.S. (*cf. Regional Formation Resource Kit; Rite of Profession, Sample Invitation*).
3. Witness(es): Those to be professed choose one or two witnesses from among the professed fraternity members. Witnesses need to review the *Rite of Profession within the Mass* (*cf. Regional Formation Resource Kit; Rite of Profession*) to become familiar with their role. They should plan on attending the rehearsal.
4. Liturgical Ministers: With the approval of the Pastor and/or Celebrant, and working with the Parish Liturgy Coordinator, Altar Servers, Lectors, Gift Bearers, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion and Music Ministers needed for this celebration could be chosen from among the Secular Franciscans, or from their family or friends, provided they are suitably prepared. If this option is chosen, make these arrangements early on.

5. Prepare a Program: With the approval of the Celebrant, the Parish Liturgy Coordinator and the Music Ministers involved in the Mass, prepare a printed program containing an explanation and outline of the Rite. Other information pertinent to the Mass, such as the readings and song selections, might be included in this program. Oftentimes, depending on the liturgical season, the Music Minister can incorporate appropriate Franciscan songs into the liturgy (*cf. Regional Formation Resource Kit; Rite of Profession Program Template*).
6. Procure the symbols that will be presented to the Candidates during the Rite, i.e., a Bible or New Testament and a Cross (*a San Damiano Crucifix is very appropriate*). The *Ritual* also makes provision for the presentation of a lighted candle and/or a Franciscan ring if desired (*cf. page 25*).
7. General Intercessions for Mass may be prepared and presented by the members of the fraternity with previous approval from those responsible for the liturgy. It would be appropriate to include a petition for the newly professed and for the entire Franciscan family. These intercessions should be submitted to the Celebrant for approval three weeks before the Profession.
8. Introduction before Mass: Choose a fraternity member to give an introduction before the Mass begins. Be certain he/she is adequately prepared. This talk should be brief and clear, and addressed to those attending to convey the meaning of the event. Preferably, it is given in one's own words, based on the model given in the *Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order* (*pages 18 – 19*).
9. Announcements in Parish Bulletins: Five weeks before the profession submit a bulletin announcement to the Parish Office where the profession will be taking place. Ask that this announcement be run for 2 – 3 weeks prior to the profession. It is a courtesy to alert parishioners to something out of the ordinary that will take place at a parish Mass, and this is a way to promote the Order. A similar announcement might be given to surrounding parishes, and certainly in the bulletin of the parish(es) to which the Candidate(s) belong (*cf. Regional Formation Resource Kit; Rite of Profession Bulletin Template*).
10. Prerequisite List: Please make sure that everything that is needed for the *Rite of Profession* is at hand, including the Bible and Cross to be presented. Other items may include, candle, ring, programs, sanctuary stand on which to place the items, etc.

One or two weeks before the Profession:

Prepare for the Rehearsal:

1. Read through the *Rite of Profession* to make sure everything is in place for the rehearsal.

Make note of the following:

- ✓ The Minister, Formation Director and Celebrant should each have a copy of the *Rite of Profession* in a liturgically appropriate binder.
 - ✓ Lectors should read from the Lectionary, not from loose pieces of paper.
 - ✓ Those leading the Universal Prayer (Intercessions) should have their paper in an attractive folder or binder. Loose pieces of paper should not be carried to the ambo or pulled out of a pocket.
 - ✓ If microphones will be used, be sure to rehearse with them.
 - ✓ Walk through the entire *Rite of Profession*.
2. Ask the Formation Director if he/she wishes to direct the rehearsal, and if not, then delegate this task to someone very familiar with the *Rite of Profession*.
 3. Before beginning the rehearsal, ask someone to lead a brief prayer.

On the day of the Profession:

1. All involved should arrive well ahead of time, wearing their “Sunday best.” Those responsible for preparing the space should complete their work at least 30 minutes before Mass begins so as to avoid interrupting prayerful preparation for Mass by the congregation.
2. See that the programs are distributed to the congregation before Mass.

Well before the Mass begins:

3. Reserve pews as needed. The Fraternity members should sit together. The front pews could be reserved for the Candidates, Minister, Formation Director, Witness(es) and maybe whoever is taking pictures. The Fraternity Minister and Candidate(s) may walk in the Entrance Procession.
4. On a table, in or near the sanctuary, place the items that will be given to the newly professed during the *Rite of Profession* (e.g., bible, San Damiano Crucifix, candle, ring).
5. If a handheld wireless microphone will be used, maybe place it in the pew where the Formation Director will be seated. Check batteries and familiarize the Candidate(s) with its use.
6. Check in with the Liturgy Coordinator, Music Ministers and other liturgical ministers to see if there are any last-minute concerns. Make sure everyone is present and ready.
7. Be in communication with the Celebrant and be ready to start on time.

**Be joyful!! You have prepared well!
Now prayerfully and joyfully participate in this beautiful *Rite of Profession*!**

Immediately after the Profession:

Record each Profession in the Fraternity Register

The Fraternity Register is a hardbound record book that lists each Admission, Profession, Transfer, and Death of Fraternity members. Include the name of each Newly Professed, the Date, the Place, Minister who received the Profession, and the Ecclesial Witness.

When the Minister of a Sponsoring Fraternity receives a profession of a Candidate from a Newly Forming Group or an Emerging Fraternity, the profession is recorded in the register of the Newly Forming Group or Emerging Fraternity (*cf. Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the O.F.S., 2012, page 40*).

Notify

The Regional Minister and the Councilor for Database Management need to be informed of the Profession(s) so that the Regional and National Databases can be kept up to date.

Shortly after the profession

1. Send a thank you note to the Pastor, Celebrant if not the Pastor, Liturgy Coordinator, Parish Music Ministers and others from the parish who assisted in the planning or participated in this celebration.
2. Make notes of what went well or what needed improving so you have them for the next time you plan a *Rite of Profession*.
3. Keep materials from the *Rite of Profession* in a file box for future reference.