

## Initiation [Enquirer]

In this folder you will find the course of study to be followed at Enquiry stage (National Statutes, art. 7.2). The Six Chapters are as follows:

### Chapter 1: In the beginning – Francis

Each chapter of the Initiation programme begins by citing the Rule of the OFS itself which provides an anchor for what follows. Here, we are introduced to St Francis of Assisi – Saint and Founder of the Franciscan family – in panorama, before proceeding to look at some of the significant events in his life in more detail, and through the eyes of some of those who have contributed to the hagiography.

1. How the Crucifix spoke to Francis for the first time (cities *The Legend of the Three Companions*) – which early work one can consult further from the Franciscan resources.
2. The Feast of St Matthias, 24 Feb 1208 – when Francis asks a priest to explain a Scripture to him – is recalled in an extract taken from the beautifully produced and readable book by Mark Galli.
3. Three Principal Texts tells us how Francis' first followers sought Scriptural guidance for the way ahead.
4. The Christmas Crib, Grecchio, 1223 – as well as explaining the origin of the now ubiquitous practice of the 'Christmas Crib' – introduces us to Celano's *First Life* (a contemporary of Francis, who wrote this Life preparatory to the canonisation in 1228).
5. Stigmata, Mount La Verna, 1224 – introduced to us with an extract from one of the greatest of Franciscan scholars, Bonaventure.
6. The Canticle of the Creatures, 1225 brings this glimpse to its conclusion. The importance of this canticle – unusual in that it is a religious hymn written in Italian and not the more conventional Latin.

### Chapter 2: Formation

In this chapter we look at what 'formation' means in religious life. The emphasis here is on the importance of *time* for discernment. This change of form, this metamorphosis, is life-long (as well as life-changing).

### Chapter 3: Rule of the OFS

Already, the Rule has been cited twice. This chapter seeks to explain the difference between the 'legal' – rule-keeping – and the 'loving' – Rule living.

### Chapter 4: Scripture

This chapter is not about bible study as such, but rather it looks at different ways of getting to grips with tackling Scripture – individually and in the group – and in the process emphasises the centrality of the Gospels in the Franciscan tradition.

### Chapter 5: Prayer

This chapter recognises the centrality of prayer in the Christian life and its importance in discerning our Christian vocation. It provides the chance to examine the different ways of praying – new to, or neglected by, some of us: meditation, the rosary, the Stations (a very Franciscan addition!)...

## **Chapter 6: A Secular Calling**

There might be some who think the OFS is not really an Order, a 'proper one' at any rate, because it lacks what most people think an Order should have. OFS members don't take vows; they don't wear habits; they don't live in community; they can marry; they can be secular priests or bishops; they can even be millionaires! This chapter, therefore, emphasises the place of our vocation – in the world. But, we don't belong to the world, we belong to Christ. And because we have a Rule & Constitutions with papal approval, and we are publicly professed, we can't go off and join another Order. So, what do we do (in the world)? This chapter helps to make that plain.