

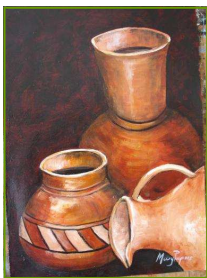
ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Enquirers -

Chapter 2: Formation

Admission into the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation...and profession of the rule. The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living. [Rule 23]

1. **FORMATION** is not just something we do prior to Profession. Formation is what being in an Order is all about. We join an Order to be 'formed' anew, and this process which begins when we are first welcomed as Enquirers, continues for the rest of our lives. New Franciscans will be familiar with Ongoing formation because they will have experienced it as Visitors to the local fraternity. They will have observed that no one is exempt—Office holders along with the rest of the Professed. [For the centrality of life in fraternity, Cf. *Handbook*, The Monthly Meeting, 28; and Rule, 20 & 21]
2. The formation is *not instruction* in the sense of amassing a body of knowledge [though acquiring knowledge will be a part of it]; it is *not training* to do specific activities [though involving oneself in individual and corporate activities will result from it]. Rather, it is about **being** something rather than **doing** something.
3. We will hear about **call**—which must be 'discerned'. We will hear about **charism**—which must be 'developed'. We will hear of **mission**—which must be 'obeyed'. And these we share in common with all members of the Franciscan family.

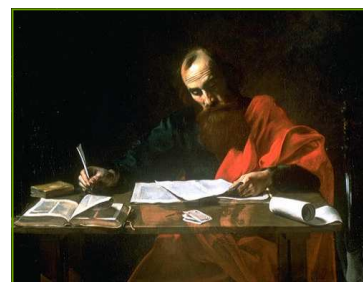
Like our holy father St Francis, what we are about is Scripture founded. Whether Formator or New Franciscan we are working together to be more like Christ himself after the example of St Francis. Formation is, then, no easy thing. There will be times of doubt; but also mountain-top experiences.



'But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.' [II Cor 4.7-10]

- So, we must make sure that we keep 'form' right there at the centre of formation. For we are undergoing a thorough transformation (from not Franciscan to committed members of Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis). As St Paul reminds us then:

'Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.' [Rom 12.2]



Remember the Incarnation. Christ himself changed 'form' in obedience to the Father.

- '...though he was in the form of God [Christ] emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness...' [Phil 2.6-7]

But this was no instant change of form but a gradual transformation—

- baby: 'she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger.' [Lk 2.7]
- youth: 'The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.' [Lk 2.40]
- man: 'Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his work.' [Lk 3.23]

And just as our transformation as Christians takes time—

- 'And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.' [II Cor 3.18]

so it is in the Order itself.

Gospel life, first and foremost.



'The rule and the life of the Secular Franciscans is this: To observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people.' [Rule 4]

'In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. [Matt 5.16]



'Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witnessing to him even in difficulties and persecutions.' [Rule 10]

'and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve,...' [Mk 10.44-45]



'Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. [Rule 11]

'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' [Matt 5.3]



'Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives.' [Rule 15]

'In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.' [Matt 7.12]