



- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

Part 6: Life in Fraternity

8. Preparing for Professions

Requests for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order must be presented to the local fraternity, whose council decides upon the acceptance of new brothers and sisters. Admission to the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation of at least one year and profession of the Rule. The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living. The age for profession and the distinctive Franciscan sign are regulated by the statutes. Profession by its very nature is a permanent commitment. Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue. Withdrawal or permanent dismissal from the Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity council according to the norm of the constitutions. Rule 23

As Molly walked through the streets of Assisi, she looked up and down, and...she saw...the very ordinary but ancient loveliness of the tiny city loved by Francis...In spite of the simple beauty of the place, the people, and the gentle bustle of Assisi, it is impossible not to look up and to see the lines of the buildings, the towers of the churches, and the weathered colouring of the roof-tiles. But then your eyes are lifted higher – to the ascending Mount Subiaco where the Carceri is built into the mountain, and up again into the wide glory of the skies above Assisi.

This is a rooftop perspective in which the believer is drawn ever upwards, with both feet on the ground of mortality and charity, but with the heart in heaven. This is the pattern of Jesus who came from glory to Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilee, and who indwelt his servants Francis and Clare in the streets and the fields of Assisi.

Brother Ramon SSF *A Month with St Francis* (p 39)

Q. 1 Why get 'professed'? Surely it's enough just to come faithfully to the monthly meetings as the mood takes you and go to Mass as you've always done?

Q. 2 What is 'initiation', 'initial formation', and 'Profession for'—after all, OFS is not much more than a prayer group, isn't it?



Profession is a grace granted by God where by we consecrate ourselves to the cause of the kingdom. It is a solemn, public and ecclesial event and is simultaneously *an action of Christ and of the Church—a salvation event*. In living the life as set out by the Rule and Constitutions the professed one's life is centred on the commitment to live always *the gospel in the manner of St Francis*. There is a strong relationship between Baptism, Confirmation and Profession. *Profession acts on the Baptism, and develops it, producing a new effusion of the Spirit.*

Within the Franciscan family we are given 'stability, direction, support and depth' in our search for holiness as a person in the world where we are expected to live out the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience—according to our place in life [single or married, taking responsibilities for the care of others who are dependent on us, with due obedience to the call of Christ within our life-situation in the world].



Scripture—

Isa 6. 1-8

In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.' The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. And I said: 'Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!'

Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: 'Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!'