

# Ongoing Formation

National Formation Conference for Regional  
Formation Directors

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## Prayer of St. Anselm of Canterbury

O my God teach my heart where and how to seek You,  
Where and how to find You.

You are my God and You are my all and I have never seen You.

You have made me and remade me,  
You have bestowed on me all the good things I possess,  
Still I do not know You.

I have not yet done that for which I was made.  
Teach me to seek You.

I cannot seek You unless You teach me  
Or find you unless You show Yourself to me,  
Let me seek You in my desire,  
Let me desire You in my seeking.  
Let me find You by loving You,  
Let me love You when I find You.

# What is Ongoing Formation?

# Ongoing Formation is:



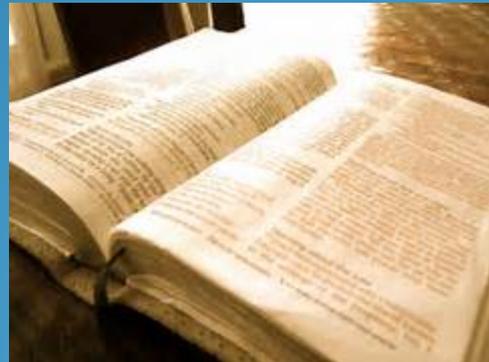
- A process of renewal for the entire fraternity
- It results in a continual process of conversion
- Includes updating our Franciscan spirituality
- Deepening our commitment to the gospel life

# What are the Goals of Ongoing Formation?

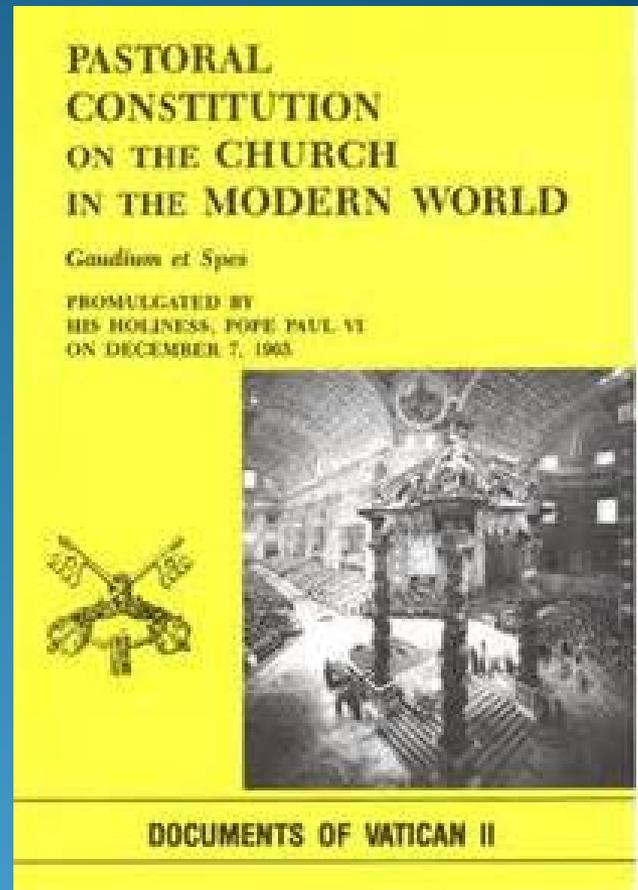
# General Constitutions: 44.3 states:

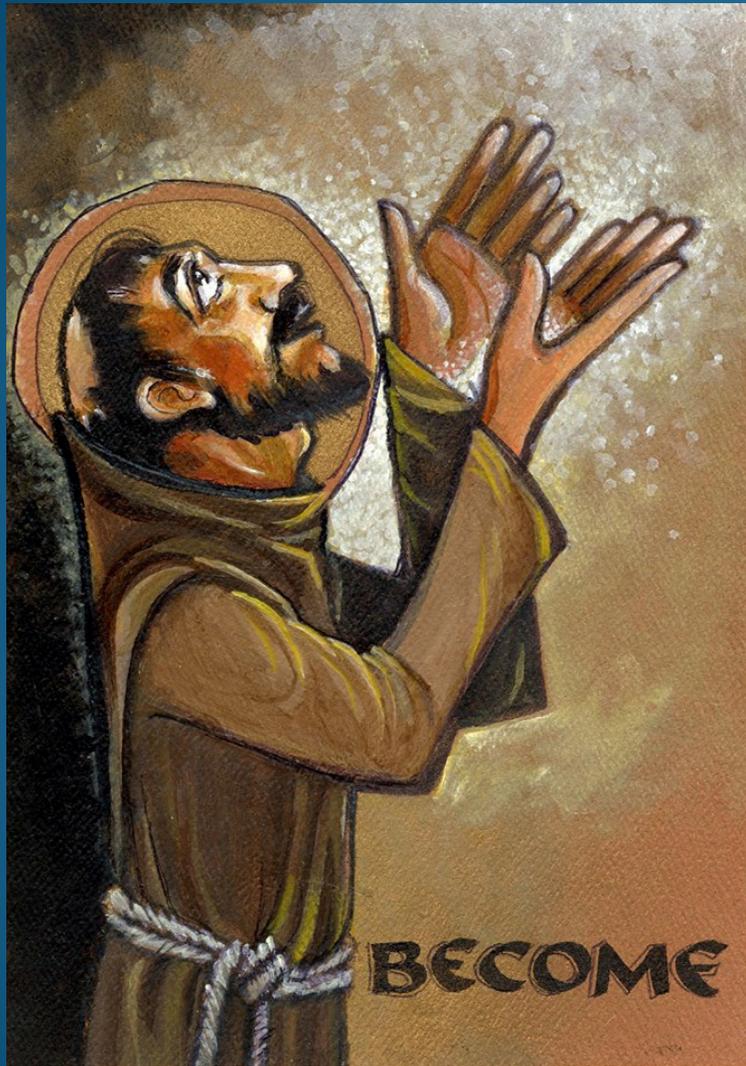
“Ongoing Formation...aims to assist the Brothers and Sisters:

- in listening and meditating on the Word of God, “going from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel;”



- ... reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith, and with the help of the documents of the teaching of the Church, consequently taking consistent positions;





- ... discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by studying the writings of St. Francis, St Clare and Franciscan authors.”

## The **Purpose** of Ongoing Formation...is

- To support the professed members' commitment, and
- to strengthen their *Franciscan vocation* so that the ongoing *conversion* process will ***continue as lifestyle.***"



How do we do  
this?

# Ongoing Formation takes place in:



- Local fraternity meetings
- Local Council meetings
- Regional Council meetings
- National Council meetings
- International Council meetings

# Ongoing Formation must be

## *Franciscan*

in nature!

**It is our LIFEBLOOD!**



- Personal devotions, although they are beautiful expressions of spirituality, should not take the place of ongoing formation on a regular basis!
- Ongoing formation should take the greatest amount of time in a fraternity meeting, council meetings may be shorter.



THE  
RULE  
OF THE  
SECULAR  
FRANCISCAN  
ORDER

# The Rule of the OFS

“The Rule of Life of the Secular Franciscan is  
this:

To observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus  
Christ

by following the example of St. Francis  
of Assisi....”



## Article 4:

“..the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.”

“The longer you look at Jesus, the more you will want to serve Him in the world.”

Rev.N.T.Wright



Rembrandt, “The Face of Jesus”



“In order to follow Christ, we  
have to be attentive to Him.”

Fr. David B Couturier, OFM, Cap

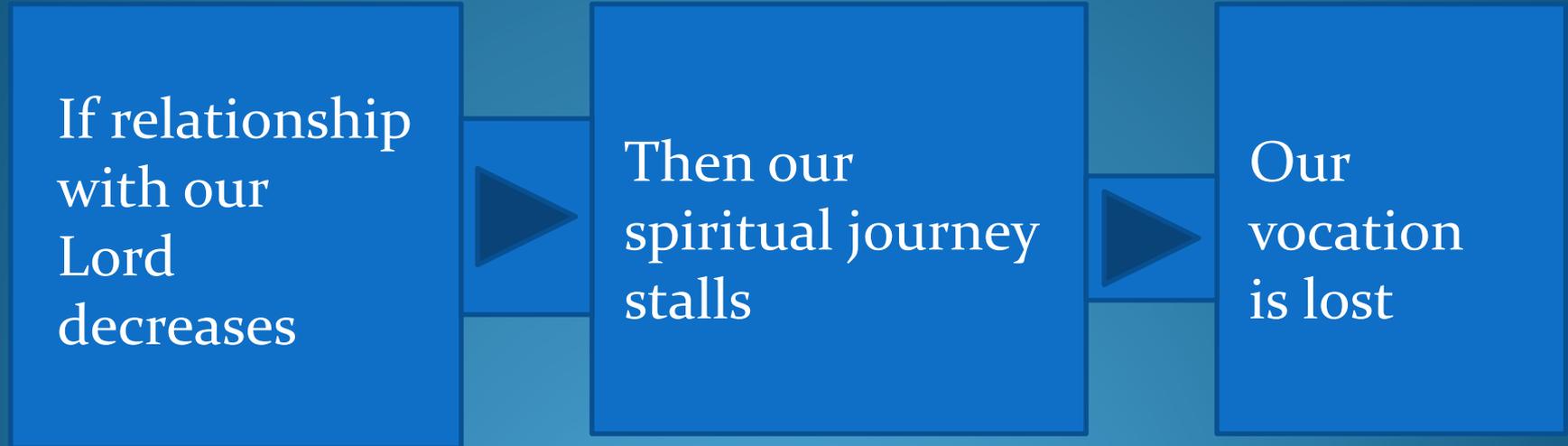
“The real purpose of formation is to set one’s feet on a path leading to an ever deepening Trinitarian relationship until we can fully say it is Christ who lives in us.”



Bob Fitzsimons, OFS

Past National Formation Director

# It is all about *RELATIONSHIP* and *DIALOG*



Our relationship needs RENEWAL!

# St. Bonaventure:

*“If you wish to know how these things come about,  
ask for grace not instruction,  
desire not understanding,  
the groaning of prayer  
not diligent reading  
The Spouse, not the teacher  
God not man,  
Darkness not clarity  
Not light but fire  
That totally inflames  
And carries us into God  
By ecstatic unctions and  
Burning affections.  
This fire is God,  
And His furnace is in Jerusalem;  
And Christ enkindles it  
In the heat of His burning passion.  
(Soul’s Journey Into God, 7.6)*

# Three Levels of Transcendence\*



\* Fr. Luigi Rulla as cited in the “*The Four Conversions: A Spirituality of Transformation*” by David B. Couturier, OFM Cap. St. Bonaventure N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2017. p.26-7.



“Personal conversion is not simply the intellectual or cognitional acquiescence to a body of dogma. The truth of the Gospel must be internalized...”

David B. Couturier, OFM, Cap in *“The Four Conversions: A Spirituality of Transformation”* 2nd ed. St. Bonaventure N.Y.: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2017. p. 53

“We can describe personal conversion as a process by which we, through the help of God’s grace, internalize the self transcendent values of our Christian faith. It is the process by which we recognize the dispositions of our lives (i.e. our needs and attitudes) and align them in a consistent manner with the Gospel ideals of Christ.

David B. Couturier, OFM, Cap, p.53.

OFS Rule,  
Article 4:



“...the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.”

# John 14: 15-20,26

“...I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of Truth, which the world cannot accept, because it neither sees nor knows it. But you will know it, because it remains in you, and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me, because I live and you will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father and you are in me and I in you. The Advocate, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in my name-he will teach you everything and remind you of all that [I] told you.”

So, how can we do this?

How can we facilitate the Holy Spirit's transformation of our Secular Franciscan brothers and sisters in our ongoing formation programs?

# St. Clare

“ Place you mind before the mirror of eternity!  
Place your soul in the brilliance of glory!  
Place your heart in the figure of divine  
substance!

**And transform your entire being into the  
image of the Godhead itself through  
contemplation.**

So that you too may feel what His friends feel  
as they taste the hidden sweetness that God  
Himself has reserved from the beginning for  
those who love Him.” 3LgA 12-14.

“Clare’s way of contemplation is central to relationship with God. It is not the goal but the means of union and transformation”

Ilia Delio, in *Clare of Assisi: A Heart Full of Love*

# St. Clare's Fruits of Contemplation

“whose affection excites,  
Whose contemplation refreshes,  
Whose kindness fulfills,  
Whose delight replenishes.”  
(4LAg, 11-12)

# St. Clare's Method of Contemplation



“O most noble Queen,  
gaze [on Him],  
consider [Him],  
contemplate [Him],  
as you desire to imitate [Him]

## Ongoing Formation:

Article 4: “...the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.”

## Goals:

- The brother or sister will be able to identify various ways the Holy Spirit communicates in his/her life.
- The brother or sister will become more attentive to the Holy Spirit in his/her own life.
- The brother or sister will be able to trust in inspirations or revelations of the Holy Spirit after confirmation.



“Elijah Fed by the Raven” by Giovanni Savoldo, ca. 1510

# Questions for Small Group Discussion (Meditation):

- Describe your experience... How did the Holy Spirit reveal himself to you?
- Did you have any inspirations or revelations during the experience? Please share.
- What were the graces or fruits of the contemplation?
- How will YOU imitate Him?

## FINAL THOUGHTS;

- We have to touch hearts! We have to have relationships with each other! We have to share our spirituality!
- Spiritual and “heart” learning and growth is imperative- not just “head” learning or knowledge. This is what renews our spirit!

## Final Thoughts continued...

- **SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL, LESS IS MORE!** Deepen the understanding of a phrase rather than a page.
- We need emotional connections to the values, charism of the OFS. In other words, we need to “buy in!”
- We need to facilitate a deepening relationship with God, with each other in fraternity, and the world

## Final Thoughts continued...

- Build in “contemplative pauses” to allow each brother and sister to spiritually “attend”/ or consider the presented material.



# Final Thoughts continued...

Ongoing Formation topics are dependant upon the specific fraternity/council's needs.

Some needs might be for the fraternity/council to become more familiar with a personal and spiritual understanding of the Constitutions, the Rule, JPIC, Youth, Franciscan Theology etc.



## FINAL THOUGHTS continued...



Small group sharing should be an integral part of ongoing formation to allow reflection upon the material and support fraternity growth in cohesiveness of shared experience.

## FINAL THOUGHTS continued...

- **ENGAGEMENT** is necessary in a personal and spiritual way in fraternity.  
*(Use reflection, discussion and one to one sharing.)*
- It's all about **RELATIONSHIP & DIALOG!**  
If dialog with God stops our relationship withers and our vocation as an OFS dies!

# Methods to Facilitate Transformation

- Story telling
- Acting our significant Franciscan legends & stories
- Meditation: St. Clare's method with imaginative use of the senses, considering Franciscan values & charism
- Praxis

# Techniques

- Allow enough reflective time to process the impact of the challenge of the ongoing formation experience
- Use open ended questions to encourage spiritual reflection and conversion (see handout)
- Use of sacred music to set the tone and reflection.
- Of course, small group sharing to help process the “heart” issues

# SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

How can the Regional Formation Directors assist the local fraternity in developing ongoing formation programs to emphasize spiritual transformative experiences?

What is the Role of the Regional Formation Director for Ongoing Formation for the region and the REC?

BRAINSTORM WITH  
YOUR  
NEIGHBOR!

*“What you hold, may you hold,  
What you do, may you do and not stop.  
But with swift pace, light step,  
unswerving feet...  
May you go forward  
securely, joyfully and swiftly,  
On the path of prudent happiness...  
So that nothing prevents you... in the  
perfection to which the Spirit of the Lord  
has called you.”*

*St. Clare, Second Letter to Agnes*