Rule 23: Membership in OFS

- Attained through time – initial formation and profession of the Rule
- **Journey of Formation begins** with entrance into the Fraternity
- Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation
- Those responsible for Formation are: the candidate, the entire fraternity, the council with the minister, master of formation and the spiritual assistant
- Brothers & Sisters are responsible for their own formation
- Fraternity responsible for warm welcome, prayer and example
- Formation elaboration & adoption of means is adapted to local situations
Rule 23 – Time of Initiation – Preparatory Phase

- Intended for discernment of a vocation
- Time to get acquainted between fraternity and aspiring member
- It should guarantee freedom and seriousness of entrance into the OFS
- Duration of Initiation and forms employed in development are established by the national statutes
- Fraternity Council decides possible exceptions to time of initiation, keeping in mind the guidelines of the national council (constitutions - art. 38.1, 38.2, 38.3)
Admission to the Order – Requested in Writing by Aspirant

- Conditions:
  - Profess the Catholic Faith
  - Live in communion with the Church
  - Be of good moral standing
  - Show signs of a vocation

- Fraternity Council decides collegially on the request and communicates this to aspirant and the fraternity
Rite of Admission – By Ritual

- Candidate must request in writing to minister of local fraternity
- Master of Formation and assistant discuss with council
- Secret ballot is taken by fraternity council, informs candidate and fraternity of decision
- Admission must be registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity (constitutions – art.39.1-4)
Perpetual Profession (*Promise of Evangelical Life*)

- Having completed the time of Initial Formation – candidate submits formal request in writing to local minister
- Master of Formation and assistant discuss candidate – council decides by secret ballot whether to admit or not
- When opportune to lengthen the time of formation, it must NOT be extended to more than a year beyond the time established by the national statutes (constitution - art, 41.1-3)
- **Profession is permanent** – connected to OFS Rule, guidance of the constitutions and national statutes

**Conditions for Profession**

- Active in Initial Formation for at least 1 year
- Consent of Local Fraternity Council
- 21 + years of age
Candidates must know – On going Formation is Essential for all Professed Members

- Formation materials can help guide understanding
- YOU must put into practice in everyday living
- Work & Cooperation is required to achieve the goal of formation
- Your continued understanding & implementation of the Franciscan vision is expected

While in Candidacy – Attendance at Gatherings important
Readiness to engage in fraternity ministries is part of formation
Learn Contemplative Prayer – develop a prayful perspective
Formation – Franciscan Style

- Require interactions among participants – we learn from one another
- Regularly reflect upon the Scriptures
- Fraternity formation directors should schedule meetings that allow for at least 1 hour
- Integrates lessons, offers pertinent information, allows for the formation of life in response to the information and accepts the transformation of personal life that the Rule requires – developing a Franciscan manner of living and perspective of life
Profession – Grace given by the Holy Spirit

- Renews the call of Baptism – to be one with Christ
- Holy Spirit enables us to live a Franciscan life - choice to live the Gospel in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi
- Profession incorporates us into fraternity life with all the consequences it brings with it.
- Fraternity is a cell of the Church, newly professed commits to the Franciscan way of life

Before Profession - One must have received the sacrament of Confirmation
Profession

- Takes place in context of the Eucharist – if not possible, a liturgy of the Word should be the liturgical action for profession (Ritual of the OFS – p.5, 3:31)
- Local Spiritual Assistant is the church-witness - if not possible s/he can delegate this role to another knowledgeable person (Ritual of OFS p.6-3:35)
- Profession is done in presence of the entire fraternity
Mission of OFS is defined by “being”

- We are not defined by the tasks we perform - but by the Franciscan spirit which prompts the task
- Vocation is to love and live in union with the church - realize apostolic commitment
- Dedication to the duties of their parish and diocese – apostolic & social
- Spirit of Service – be present with in the life of the diocese
- Collaborate with other ecclesial groups & participate in pastoral councils
Principal Services to the Church

- Fidelity to the Franciscan Charism
- Witness of building fraternity
- Community of Love
- Promise to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis
Rule 23 - What to do in difficulties

- When having difficulty in living the Franciscan way of life – one must talk with minister and spiritual assistant – or the Council (Cf. National Statute 18.7)

- Members may ask, with a formal act, temporary withdrawal from the fraternity

- The Council will evaluate with love and prudence, after fraternal dialogue between minister and the assistant with the person concerned

- If reasons are well founded, and after the member has had time to reconsider, the council agrees to the request.

- Repeated and prolonged default in the obligations of the life of the fraternity and other conduct in serious opposition to the Rule – council needs to discuss with the individual involved

- Only in the case of obstinacy or relapse may the council decide with the secret ballot to suspend someone. The decision must be communicated in writing.

- Voluntary withdrawal or the provision for suspension must be noted in the register of the fraternity. It involves exclusion from meetings and activities of the fraternity including the right of active and passive voice, but membership in the Order itself is not affected. (Constitution – art 56.1, 56.2, 56.3)
FINANCES

Fair Share donations support the OFS at all levels. Generosity is important.

Stewardship calls us to support the Secular Franciscan way of life.

Fair Share covers cost of fraternity council and the costs of higher councils.

Regional Councils – (the Executive Council and the local ministers) establish for the region, the Fair Share amount needed annually to meet the budget of the Region.

Councils at all levels accept bequests and donations to support their work. Remember the OFS in your will if possible.

Member should contribute according to their means – differs with each and at various times of life. 

All Levels
International, National, Regional, Local Fraternity

Helping the poor, especially in our fraternities

Room Rent for Gatherings & Professions

Stipend for Spiritual Assistant

Stipend for Visitations & Elections

Postage, computer programs, office supplies

Formation – materials, printing, paper, ink
Financial Reporting

- Councils at all levels give an annual report to the OFS members (Cf. Constitutions – article 52.4, 52.5)
- Councils are responsible to make decisions regarding use of funds, deliberate on matters regarding financial management and economic affairs of the fraternity
- Councils must have, before its term of office is finished, the fraternities financial and real estate situation audited by an expert who is not a member of the council or by the fraternities' board of examiners (constitution – article 62.2i, 62.2j)
- Fraternities are discouraged from investing in real estate or other properties
Duties of an OFS Treasurers –

- Guard contributions received, recording each receipt in the appropriate register with:
  - Date on which it was given
  - Name of contributor
- Record in same register – items of expense; name, date and purpose in conformity with direction of the council
- Render an account of his/her administration to the assembly and to the council of the fraternity in accordance to the norms of the national statutes (Constitutions – article 53.4)
Community Responsibility

- In financial matters servant leaders must be accountable and transparent.
- In like manner, fraternity members are accountable for living Franciscan lives, according to the Rule & constitutions.
- A Community of Love helps each other to be faithful to our profession.
- Seek ways to support each other in living the Rule.
- The OFS is the beneficiary of the faithfulness of our lives, the gift of our talents and our generous financial support.