Ritual
of the Secular Franciscan Order

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International Franciscan Liturgical Commission, Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., General Spiritual Assistant, Chairman and Editor

Approved in Latin by the Offices of the Sacred Congregation
for Sacraments and Divine Worship
March 9, 1984, in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption.

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Foreword

History of the Ritual

For the early 20th century the only Ritual available in English for members of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis was contained in the Third Order prayer book "The Tertiary's Companion" originally edited by Vincent Schrempp, O.F.M.

In 1955 there was a demand for a more elaborate ritual book, which resulted in the Ritual for Public Functions, Franciscan Third Order, compiled and published by Mark Hegener, O.F.M.

In 1966, following the Second Vatican Council, it became necessary to revise the ceremonial to bring it into accord with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This resulted in the New Ritual for Public Functions, compiled by Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., and his associates.

In 1978, the revised Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order was approved by Pope Paul VI on June 24 and promulgated by the four Franciscan Ministers General on October 4. Immediately work began on updating the Ritual to conform to the new Rule.

On March 9, 1984, the Latin text of the new Ritual was approved by the Sacred Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship and, on August 5, 1985, this English edition was approved by the same Congregation.

Authorship of the Text

The Latin text of this Ritual was compiled by an International Commission. Immediately after its approval on March 9, 1984, an English edition was circulated to the Tertiaries of all English-speaking countries with the invitation for their appraisal and suggestions. The final English text, incorporating the fruits of two rounds of International consultations, was then produced by the International Commission — chaired by General Spiritual Assistant Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., who also served as its editor — with

approval of the Franciscan Friars Conference of the U.S.A. (O.F.M., O.F.M. Cap., O.F.M. Conv., T.O.R.).
The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants of the U.S.A. was then commissioned by the Secular Franciscans of the English-speaking countries (Australia, the United States, the Philippines, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, India, England, Zambia, Singapore, Malta and Tanzania) to produce and distribute this new English Ritual for the Third Order Secular.

A New Spirit

The Second Vatican Council and the Pauline OFS Rule have injected new spirit and vigour into our Franciscan Family. This new intercontinental Ritual of 1985, coming seven years after the promulgation of the Pauline Rule, adapts our traditional Ritual to this new spirit and style. This one book offers background information, liturgical guidelines, and prayers to enrich the prayer life of our English-speaking sisters and brothers the world over.

While it was necessary to "generalise" certain ceremonial and devotional aspects in this Ritual in order that its basic, essential elements might be useful to all English-speaking nations and cultures, it is within the competence of National Councils to supplement and enrich the ceremonies by incorporating appropriate expressions of their cultures and peoples.

Franciscan communities who use this book are urged to enrich their local celebrations with signs, symbols, gestures, music, and whatever practices are appropriate to enhance the spirit of prayer of their worshiping community. In this way this new Ritual will be an effective means for our worldwide Franciscan Family, for each local community and for every individual Franciscan to achieve what Francis desired for us, namely, "to have the Spirit of God at work within them, while they pray to him unceasingly with a heart free from self-interest" (Rule of 1223, 10).

David Eckelkamp, O.F.M. Secretary, Conference of National Spiritual Assistants of the U.S.A. Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 1985.

TO THE FRANCISCAN FAMILIES
OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

At the request of Very Reverend Father Jose Angulo, Minister General of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, in the name of the Ministers General of the Franciscan Families and of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, by letters issued on the fifth day of October, 1983, by virtue of the faculties given to this Sacred Congregation by the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, we gladly approve or confirm the text of the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order written in the Latin language and attached to this decree.

The confirmation granted by the Apostolic See is to be mentioned in the printed text. Moreover, two samples of the same printed text are to be forwarded to this Sacred Congregation.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, on the ninth day of March 1984, in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption.

Joseph Cardinal Casoria
Prefect

+ Vergilius Noe
Titular Archbishop of Voncaria
Secretary

Part I
Rites for Entering the Secular Franciscan Order

NB: *The numbering here in this "**Preface** to the Ritual is different than in the Brown Book with the large purple Tau. The Editors of the "Trilogy" have found the numbering in the edition with the large purple Tau far too confusing and have renumbered this preface. Remember this if you are making a reference to the Preface of the Ritual from this book.*

Preface

I The Nature of Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS)

1.1 Many men and women, married and single, and many members of the diocesan clergy are called by God to follow the way of perfection of the gospel life after the example and manner of Francis of Assisi, to share his charism, and to make it present in the world. They promise to follow Jesus Christ and to live the gospel in fraternity by entering the Secular Franciscan Order. In this way, they manifest the priceless gift of Baptism and realise it in a fuller and more fruitful way.

1.2 The Church has always esteemed highly this form of life prompted by the Holy Spirit *"for the good of the Church and the human community."*[1] By means of the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV, Leo XIII, and Paul VI, the Church has made sure that this form of life is suitably adapted to her needs and expectations in the conditions of changing times.

1.3 The Secular Franciscans, gathered together in fraternity and in oneness of spirit with all the People of God, celebrate the mystery of salvation, revealed and communicated to us in Christ, with prayers and thanksgiving and by renewing their commitment to a new life.

II The Normative Character of the OFS Ritual and its Adaptation

[1] *Paul VI, Apostolic Letter Seraphicus Patriarcha (June 24, 1978), in Acta Apostolice Sedis (AAS), 70 (1978), 454.*

2.1 The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, states: *"Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is maintained, the revision of liturgical books should allow for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands."*[2] In accord with this criterion, the Secular Franciscan fraternities scattered throughout the whole world, conscious that experience itself has a specific value, want to continue to bring to completion in any people and in any given culture the mystery of the Incarnate Word, the Saviour of all people.[3]

2.2 The rites and prayers presented in these celebrations are inspired by the tradition of the Secular Franciscan fraternity and by the rituals being used experimentally in the various nations. They need to be adapted to the mentality and to the different circumstances of the fraternities scattered in so many parts of the world.

2.3 It is the task of the OFS National Councils particularly to carry out this work of adaptation.

2.4 Let it be emphasised that the rites which refer to admission and permanent commitment (profession) are to be taken as normative with regard to the essential elements, which will be indicated as such in each rite. In other words, the text of the Ritual is not necessarily to be used just as and only as printed; it must be adapted to the situations of the community using it, as long as the essential elements constituting a valid admission and profession find a meaningful and faithful expression.

2.5 The OFS Ritual should manifest the gift of the spirit proper to the Secular Franciscan Order and also its commitment to the gospel life, in a way that is suitable for any nation and in any cultural context.

2.6 On the one hand, this implies the assimilation of the valid cultural elements of each region, and, on the other hand, it presumes fidelity to the Secular Franciscan vocation and to its universality,

[2] Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #38.

[3] See Franciscans at Prayer, Introduction, #28-30

that is, to unity among all the fraternities and the oneness of the fraternities with the Church. So, the Ritual has to contain a commonness with the Secular Franciscan Order everywhere in the world while expressing the particular character of a nation or culture.

III. The Rites That Accompany the Steps of OFS Life

3.1 The steps by which the new members and the candidates are incorporated into the Secular Franciscan Order after a period of inquiry and preparation are: (1) the time of formation or candidacy for at least one year, and (2) the permanent commitment to gospel life or "profession" of the Rule. In their ritual expression, these steps are preceded by a ceremony of welcoming. Furthermore, the renewal of commitment, either as part of temporary commitment or in celebration of a jubilee, is added to these basic steps.

3.2 The whole fraternity is involved in this gradual journey or ongoing process of growth both by the witness of its manner of living and by its participation in the liturgical rites.

3.3 Through the Spiritual Assistant and the President (Minister) who represents the Fraternity, the Church accepts the commitment and the profession of those who profess the rule and life of the Secular Franciscan Order. By her public prayer, the Church entreats the help and grace of God for them. She imparts her blessing over them and accompanies their commitment or profession with the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Ceremony of Welcoming

3.4 The ceremony of welcoming at the beginning of the period of inquiry is a simple and para-liturgical expression of the community's interest in the newcomers and its support for their searching out the Secular Franciscan vocation.

3.5 It does not take place within the context of a ritual or liturgical celebration, but rather as part of the fraternal portion of the regular meeting of the community.

Rite of Admission

3.6 The rite of admission, which precedes the time of formation or candidacy, should be simple and plain. It is appropriate that this entrance into the Secular Franciscan Order take place within a celebration of the Word of God with the whole fraternity present, and not during the celebration of the Eucharist.

3.7 The normative elements that should be clearly and evidently highlighted for the candidates are the following:

a) the request and the will to experience the gospel life, like Francis of Assisi;

b) having in mind that the request is related to a possible future commitment to live this way of life, with the help of a fraternity, in communion and harmony with the whole Franciscan Family.

3.8 Present at this rite are:

a) the candidates;

b) the OFS Spiritual Assistant or the superior of a Franciscan religious community to which the secular fraternity is especially connected who presides over the liturgical rite. In case of necessity, another priest or religious can be delegated.

c) the President / Minister of the fraternity who receives the new members in the name of the Fraternity Council.[4] The president / Minister should occupy a significant place in the celebration in order to bring out the meaning of the office.

d) the director of formation;

e) the members of the Local Fraternity.

3.9 If for good reasons, the rite of admission is celebrated without the presence of a priest, the president (Minister) presides at the celebration as well as receives the candidates for the time of formation.

3.10 A fraternal social gesture of welcome to the newcomers can precede or follow the rite of entry, as an expression of joy and as a pledge of fraternal support.

[4] See Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS Rule), art. 23.

Rite of Profession
or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life

3.11 Since by its very nature profession is a public and ecclesial act; it should be celebrated in the presence of the whole fraternity, *"a visible sign of the Church, the community of love."*[5] It is fitting that the profession be made during the celebration of the Eucharist or at least within an appropriate celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

3.12 The normative elements of the profession rite, which express the nature of permanent commitment to the gospel life, are:

a) the renewal of one's consecration and promises at Baptism and Confirmation. This means dedicating oneself to God through his people with all the consequences flowing from it, up to the present moment, in order to live in union with God and to hold firm to his plan of salvation, by means of a consecration that is to be lived in the world (or as diocesan clergy).

b) the desire to live the gospel by following St. Francis of Assisi;

c) definitive incorporation into the Secular Franciscan Order, which is the harmonious union of all the members who promise to live the gospel after the example of St. Francis of Assisi while remaining in their secular vocation either as laity or clergy;

d) the desire to live in the world and for the world. In this regard, profession aims to be a gospel leaven and also a commitment to collaborate in building a more fraternal world.[6] Members of the diocesan clergy by their profession confirm the appropriate pledges and promises of their specific episcopal, presbyteral or diaconal vocation.

e) the desire to live the gospel for the whole of one's life. This dimension is the expression of a person's generosity in sharing the fullness of one's innermost being, and also the acceptance of the risks that are inseparable from any human choice that is so permanent and important.

[5] OFS Rule, art. 22.

[6] OFS Rule, art. 14.

f) the candidate's confidence, supported by the help of the OFS Rule and the fraternity. The candidate will feel led and helped by the Rule approved by the Church and will experience the joy of sharing the journey of gospel life with the other members, from whom one can receive something and to whom a person can give something. Being incorporated into the Local Fraternity, which is an integral part of the Church, the candidate will contribute toward rebuilding the whole Church.

3.13 The elements considered above may be united in a single formula of profession or may even be expressed in the form of a dialogue. Some of these fundamental concepts, such as service of God and of his Church, simply cannot be expressed explicitly or adequately in a formula, since they are repeated constantly throughout the whole celebration, or they may always be presupposed in the very act of commitment to gospel life.

3.14 The commitment to the gospel life is received by the president (Minister) in the name of the Church and of the Fraternity. The priest presides over this rite as the witness of the Church's hierarchy and of the Franciscan Family.

3.15 In exceptional circumstances, when a lack of priests calls for it or makes it necessary, the candidates pronounce their profession before the Fraternity. The President (Minister) of the Fraternity presides at the celebration of the Word (or has another preside) and also receives the profession, while the professed members of the fraternity act as witnesses.

Rite of Temporary Commitment to the Gospel Life (and Annual Renewal)

3.16 Profession or permanent commitment can be preceded and prepared for by a temporary promise or commitment, renewed annually, but not extended beyond three years since it is a preparation for final commitment.

3.17 This option is offered for pedagogical reasons, namely, to facilitate a suitable and gradual formation and entry of members into the Secular Franciscan Order. For that reason, the renewal is made with the same frame of mind in order to respond to the goal of this pedagogical preparation.

3.18 The rite of annual renewal can be performed in a celebration of the Word of God with a very simple formula, but ordinarily not within the context of the Eucharist, since this is reserved for one's permanent and final commitment. The readings and the whole rite may be arranged to suit the circumstances. If it is performed in some kind of liturgical celebration, the celebrant may give a short homily.

Jubilee Ceremony

3.19 This ceremony celebrates the fidelity to the gospel life and the OFS Rule of those members observing their 25th or 50th anniversary in the Secular Franciscan Order.

3.20 It is a simple and joyous ceremony ordinarily incorporated into a Mass of Thanksgiving or other appropriate liturgical celebration.

IV. Notes for Liturgical Practice

4.1 A liturgical celebration expresses and brings about the most profound religious sentiments within a person. In an intense and concentrated moment, the reality of one's faith-experience is made present. Hence, a good liturgical event presupposes dignity, order, and reverence, on the one hand, and, on the other, the personal touch of sincerity and involvement.

4.2 So, in planning and celebrating the various rites which follow, it is important to keep in mind some particular observations in order to enhance that liturgical expression.

The Scripture Readings

4.3 All Scripture texts are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, and all psalms come from the Grail Psalmody because these are universally accepted translations in all of the English-speaking countries. Of course, it is to be understood that any other approved translation may be substituted for the text given.

4.4 According to the situation, other suitable and similar readings may be chosen instead of the ones indicated. They may be taken from the Scripture Readings given in Appendix I.1., or from the Roman Lectionary.

The Prayers and Formulae

4.5 Except for the formula for profession or permanent commitment, which should be used basically in the form given, all the other formulae and prayers presented in the text are to be considered as models to guide those planning the ceremonies in providing a ritual expression that is both common to the whole Secular Franciscan Order and suited to the local circumstances or to the particular people involved. The adaptation of the given texts is encouraged.

4.6 To signify the importance and the personal character of the event, it is especially recommended that the inquirers and the candidates formulate their own statements of intent for the rite of admission and the rite of profession respectively, in accord with the models presented.

The Liturgical Setting

4.7 Each of the parties in a liturgical celebration has his or her particular function; this is all the more true when an event like admission or profession is solemnized through ritual. Special care should be taken that the various participants perform their own proper role and do so only after sufficient preparation and guidance.

4.8 It must always be remembered that a ritual occasion is also a communal event. The whole community should be able to participate as fully as possible not only through its appropriate responses but also by being able to see the proceedings clearly. The participants, then, need to make sure that they position themselves before the community so that they are most visible.

4.9 The gradual movement toward permanent commitment in the Secular Franciscan Order is expressed and realised not only by the actual rite but also through the appropriate liturgical context within which that rite is celebrated. Since the Eucharist is the high point and peak experience of Christ's sacrificial self-giving and our communion with the Lord, it is expected that this context be reserved for one's permanent commitment to the gospel life in

profession, and that the other rites occur during a celebration of the Word of God or the Liturgy of the Hours.

CHAPTER ONE

Ceremony of Introduction and Welcoming

At the beginning of the time of inquiry, it is appropriate for the newcomers to be introduced and welcomed into the community.

This is not a liturgical rite as much as it is the fraternity's expression of hospitality and cordiality. Hence, the ceremony should not take place during the community's time for liturgy or prayer, but rather during the "chapter" or "renewal of life" portion of the regular meeting when the ongoing formation and socialising occur.

The ceremony is to be kept as simple as possible. It begins with the professed member of the fraternity responsible for bringing the newcomer to the community introducing him/her in these or similar words:

> **May I introduce to all of you N.N. from ……., who has expressed an interest in our Franciscan way of life.**

Then the professed member may want to tell the community something about the newcomer.

This process is repeated for each of the newcomers. When all of the inquirers have been introduced, one of their number (or all of them together) states the purpose of their inquiry. It is more fitting that one's own words are used, but the speaker may also say these or similar words:

> **We (I) have come to see in your Franciscan life a way that appeals to us (me). So we (I) would like to inquire into that way and learn more about it. Perhaps in time we (I), by the grace of God, may be able to become part of the Secular**

Franciscan Order and thus come to serve the Lord and his people more faithfully.

In the name of the Fraternity, the Minister responds in his/her own words or in such a manner:

On behalf of this Fraternity, I warmly welcome you, and I note your desire to inquire into the Secular Franciscan way of life. Be assured that in your search, you will have the support and the encouragement of our prayer, our formation, and our example. And always keep in mind the words of St. Francis to Brother Leo: "In whatever way you think will best please our Lord God and follow in his footsteps and in poverty, take that way with the Lord God's blessing."

Then the formation director presents the inquirer(s) with a short life of St. Francis, saying in these or similar words:

Take this life of St. Francis and read it carefully, in order to learn how to live the gospel life of our Lord Jesus Christ by following his example.

The welcoming concludes with a prayer offered by the Spiritual Assistant or by one of the secular members of the fraternity. The prayer may be extemporaneous or may be taken from a liturgical text or from the writings of St. Francis. Also, the following may be used as a model for that prayer:

O Lord our God,
you have shown us your wisdom and love,
and you have called us to follow you.
May the person(s) here present
inquiring into the Secular Franciscan Order
be inspired and strengthened
by your grace and the support of this community.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

The whole community expresses its sentiments in the customary fashion.

CHAPTER TWO
Rite of Admission

It is fitting that the rite of admission take place within an appropriate celebration of the Word of God, but not during the Mass. The rite is to be kept simple and is to be performed before the community (see Preface, 3.6).

Before the celebration is about to begin, one of the members of the fraternity may give a short admonition on the meaning of the event. It is appropriate that the text be specially composed for the occasion; the following thoughts may be used as a model:

> **The Lord has called us to live the gospel way of life in fraternity, as he showed it to Francis of Assisi. He brings us together today to receive those who, moved by the Holy Spirit, have asked to be admitted into the Secular Franciscan Order and want to begin their time of formation, which will culminate in their profession or permanent commitment to the gospel life. We will now renew our faith in the Holy Spirit and call on him: May he give us the grace to encourage and sustain their proper formation and to walk with them to attain their goal.**

Opening Rite

The rite of admission then begins with a suitable hymn. After the hymn, the Spiritual Assistant or the celebrant makes the Sign of the Cross and greets the community. He then says in these or similar words:

> **Let us acknowledge the presence of God**
> **and turn to him in prayer. (Pause)**

Lord our God,
you have sent your son, Jesus Christ,
to be for us the way, the truth, and the life.
Grant that these your people
who are asking to be admitted
into the Secular Franciscan Order,
and all of us,
may hear the words of the Gospel fully
and may observe them attentively.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen**.

Liturgy of the Word

Before the first reading these words of exhortation of St. Francis may be read from the Letter to All the Faithful (14, 2-3)

Let us hear the Word of God in the spirit of our blessed father Francis who encourages us:

In that love which is God, I beg and implore you to hear these fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love, putting them into practice with all gentleness and observing them perfectly.

First Reading (Rom 6:3-11. "Let us live a new life")

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans:

You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life.

If in union with Christ, we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realise

that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin. When a man dies, of course, he has finished with sin.

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him anymore. When he died, he died, once for all, to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23[24]; 1-2, 3-4, 5-6)

R. Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.

The Lord's is the earth and its fullness,
the world and all its peoples.
It is he who set it on the seas;
on the waters, he made it firm. **R.**

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?
Who shall stand in his holy place?
The man with clean hands and pure heart,
who desires not worthless things,
who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbour. **R.**

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord
and reward from the God who saves him.
Such are the men who seek him,
seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R.**

Verse Before the Gospel (Phil 3:8-9)

I count all things worthless but this:
to gain Jesus Christ and to be found in him.

Second Reading (Mark 1:12-15. “Repent, and believe the Good News”)

A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to Mark:

The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness,
and he remained there for forty days
and was tempted by Satan.
He was with the wild beasts,
and the angels looked after him.
After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee.
There he proclaimed the Good News from God.
“The time has come,” he said,
“and the kingdom of God is close at hand.
Repent, and believe the Good News.”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

The celebrant gives a brief homily. According to circumstances, he can invite the participants to share their reflections on the Word of God.

Rite of Admission

One of the candidates in the name of all (or all together or even each one separately) expresses the desire to enter the Secular Franciscan Order. The Minister receives the request in the name of the Fraternity. This can be done in the form of a dialogue, either in a manner especially composed for the situation or in these or similar words:

Director of Formation:

Would those who are asking to be admitted into the Secular Franciscan Order please come forward, namely, N.N.

Minister:

> **My friends** (or calling them by name),
> **what is your request?**

Candidate(s):

> **We (I) here present ask to enter this Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, so that we (I) may live more intensely and faithfully the grace and dedication of our (my) Baptism by following Jesus Christ according to the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. In this way, we (I) intend to be of service to all through our (my) secular state of life for the glory of God and to fulfil his plan of love on behalf of all people.**

Minister-perhaps with some appropriate gesture-says:

> **This Fraternity is pleased to accept your request. I, therefore, receive you into the Secular Franciscan Order so that you may begin your time of formation and experience our Franciscan life in preparation for your permanent commitment.**

Celebrant:

The Church and the Franciscan Family accept and confirm your sincere intention. May the Lord allow you to persevere in this desire and to be a leaven of gospel life within the world.

The Whole Community:

> **Thanks be to God!**
> **Blessed are those who love the Lord with their whole heart,**
> **with their whole soul and mind,**
> **with all their strength,**
> **and love their neighbours as themselves.**

Blessed are those who despise the ways of the flesh
with their vices and sins,
and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.
Blessed are those who produce worthy fruits of penance.
Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women
when they do these things and persevere in doing them,
because "the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them."
and he will make "his home and dwelling among them."
And they are children of the heavenly Father,
whose work they do,
And they are spouses, brothers, and mother
of our Lord Jesus Christ. (See: I Letter to All the Faithful, 1-7.)

It is appropriate for the whole community to express its sentiments in the customary fashion.

Presentation of the Rule of Life

While the director of formation presents a copy of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order to each of the newly admitted candidates, the Minister says in these or similar words:

The rule and 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 with people. May this too be your way of life.

While the director of formation or another member of the fraternity presents to each of the candidates the distinctive sign of the Secular Franciscan Order (National Statutes), the Minister says in these or similar words:

As you turn toward Christ in the spirit of St. Francis, receive this sign of the Secular Franciscan Order and become one with us.

The General Intercessions, the Lord's Prayer and a concluding prayer (perhaps taken from the writings of St. Francis) follow.

Then the Minister of the Fraternity addresses the new members of the fraternity. He/She may use a text particularly prepared for the occasion or these or similar words:

> **N.N., the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of …….**
> **very gladly promises to help you in your journey with friendship, prayer, and the witness of its life. You, on the other hand, strengthen our Fraternity in numbers, by virtue of your presence and participation, and through the sharing of your special gifts. You are most welcome!**

All the members exchange a sign of peace, especially with the newly admitted candidates. Meanwhile, a suitable hymn is sung.

Blessing

The rite concludes with the blessing of St. Francis:

> **The Lord bless you and keep you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May the Lord bless you,**
> **+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**
> All: **Amen**

CHAPTER THREE

Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life Within the Mass

This rite is to be used only for the permanent and definitive commitment of the candidates. If a temporary commitment is to be made at the conclusion of the time of formation, the rite in Chapter Four is to be used.

The rite described in this chapter is celebrated during the Mass because the nature of permanent commitment as a public and ecclesial act is closely tied to the celebration of the Eucharist (Preface, 3.11).

The Mass formula to be used may correspond to the liturgy of the day or, if the rubrics permit, the votive Mass of St. Francis, of St. Louis the King or St. Elizabeth of Hungary; or the Mass for the Laity may also be chosen. With regard to the hymns and exhortations during the celebration, the text of Chapter Two of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order should be kept in mind, as well as the biblical texts that support the OFS way of life.

All that is necessary for celebrating the Eucharist and for the rite of profession is to be adequately prepared beforehand.

The Minister of the Fraternity receives the profession at a suitable place in the sanctuary, while either sitting or standing. Places for those to be professed are to be arranged in the sanctuary so that the whole liturgical action can be clearly seen by the whole congregation.

Before the celebrant is about to begin, one of the members of the fraternity may give a short admonition on the meaning of the event. It is appropriate that the text be specially composed for the occasion; the following thoughts may be used as a model:

We are assembled as a community to take part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this celebration of the Eucharist N.N. are (is) going to make their (his/her) profession of the gospel life in the Secular Franciscan Order. In doing so, they (he/she) make(s) present again and renew(s) the promises of their (his/her) Baptism and the commitment of their (his/her) Confirmation.

While giving thanks to the Father through Christ for all the gifts we have received from him, we have a special reason for gratitude today: the gift of his grace which he has given to those (the one) about to be professed to live in the world according to the spirit of the Beatitudes, and also the gift of his grace which he has given to the whole community by adding (a) new member(s) to the fraternity.

The permanent commitment to the gospel life publically proclaimed today during this celebration reminds us of something which is also made present every day in the Eucharist: After the example of Christ and in union with his own act of thanksgiving, we are to present ourselves before the Father as living sacrifices of praise given for the life of the world.

Entrance Rite

The entrance hymn of the Mass is sung while the priest proceeds to the altar. Those to be professed, along with the Minister of the Fraternity and the director of formation, arrange themselves in the sanctuary in the places designated for them. Then the Mass begins. It might be appropriate to amplify the Penitential Rite in order to highlight the pervading spirit of penance, which is characteristic of commitment in the Secular Franciscan Order.

Liturgy of the Word

Everything is done as usual in the Liturgy of the Word, with the exception that:

a. The readings can be taken either from the Mass of the day or from the Scripture Readings offered in Appendix I. 1.

b. The Creed, even if part of the rubrics for the day, is to be omitted because a profession is in itself a special creedal statement.

Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life

Request

After the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant and the people sit. Those who are to be professed are called forward, and the Minister of the fraternity invites them to express their intention publicly. This may be done in the form of a dialogue between the Minister and the candidates, who express their intent either singly (each in one's own words), by means of one speaking in the name of all or by all speaking together.

Director of Formation:

> **Would the candidates for profession in the Secular Franciscan Order please come forward, namely N.N.**

(Each candidate may respond with:

> **"I am ready and willing"** or **"Present"** when called.)

Minister:

> **N.N., God, has consecrated you with water and the Holy Spirit. What do you now ask of God, the Church, and the Franciscan Family?**

The candidates present their intention. It is most appropriate that each candidate speaks in his/her own words, especially from a text particularly composed for the occasion. The individual candidates or

one in the name of all or all the candidates together may use a common formula, using the following as a model:

> **We(I) ask to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life. The experience during our (my) time of formation has strengthened us(me) in the conviction that the Lord is calling us(me) to observe the holy gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by following the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.**

Minister:

> **The fraternity accepts your petition and is united with you in your prayer. May the Holy Spirit confirm in you the work he has begun.**
> **The community acknowledges its assent in the customary fashion.**

Homily or Talk

Those to be professed are seated, and a homily is given. The biblical readings, as well as the commitment to the gospel life and its theological implications, are fittingly explained.

Questioning

After the homily, those to be professed stand. The celebrant questions them about their intent in these or similar words:
Celebrant:

> **Before this fraternity and the other members of the People of God gathered here, I ask you to express your will.**
>
> **Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which are at the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?**

Candidates, replying all together:

Yes, this is what I want.

Celebrant:

You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the gospel, together with all people of goodwill. Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?

Candidates:

Yes, this is what I want.

Celebrant:

You have been made members of the People of God by your Baptism, and strengthened in Confirmation by the new gift of the Spirit, in order to proclaim Christ by your life and your words. Do you wish to bind yourself more closely to the Church and to work intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfil its mission among all people?

Candidates:

Yes, this is what I want.

The Minister of the fraternity says in these or similar words:

The local fraternity is a visible sign of the Church, a community of faith and love. Together with all the members, you now pledge yourselves to spend your efforts to make the fraternity a genuine ecclesial assembly and a living Franciscan community.

Prayer for Divine Grace

Then the celebrant prays for divine help saying:

Let us pray.

All kneel. And in a manner customary to the community, a special time of prayer is observed, using perhaps one of the following:

a. a period of silence,
b. an invocation of the Holy Spirit,
c. a shortened or adapted form of the litany of Franciscan saints, or
d. a common prayer, particularly composed for the occasion or similar to the following:

O Lord our God,
your grace has led these, your servants
to live their faith more fully
in the context of this world
by coming to profess the gospel
according to the life and rule
of the Secular Franciscan Order.
By the power of your Holy Spirit
may they give witness
to the life and teachings of your Son
to all the world.
Grant that they may be continually united to Christ
through the gifts of their lives,
in order that the Church may be rebuilt
and her mission be fulfilled
through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Then the celebrant concludes by saying in these or similar words:

Lord, watch over these, your servants.
May the Spirit of your love penetrate their hearts,
so that your grace will strengthen them
to keep their commitment to the gospel life.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

Profession or Commitment to the Gospel Life

While the celebrant remains at the presidential chair, the Minister of the fraternity takes a suitable central place in the sanctuary, either standing or sitting.

Two professed members of the fraternity stand beside the Minister of the fraternity, acting as special witnesses.

Those to be professed approach the Minister one at a time and read the formula of profession, placing their hands, if so desired, into the hands of the Minister:

I, N.N.,
by the grace of God,
renew my baptismal promises
and consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom.

Therefore, in my secular state

(or, when appropriate, as a member of the diocesan clergy)

I promise to live
all the days of my life
the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ
in the Secular Franciscan Order
by observing its rule of life.
May the grace of the Holy Spirit,
the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary
and our holy father St. Francis,
and the fraternal bonds of community
always be my help,
so that I may reach the goal
of perfect Christian love.

To each one, the Minister responds:

Thanks be to God!
As Minister of this fraternity,
I accept your profession

and receive you into this fraternity of……
of the Secular Franciscan Order.
Your membership in the fraternity
is a cause of great joy and hope
for all the members of the community
and for the whole Church.

When all the candidates have made their profession, and the Minister has accepted it, the celebrant speaks to them in these or similar words:

I confirm your commitment in the name of the Church.
Our seraphic father himself encourages you
in the words of his Testament:
"May whoever observes all this
be filled in heaven with the blessing
of the most high Father,
and on earth with that of his beloved Son,
together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
and all the powers of heaven and all the saints."

Presentation of Symbols of Profession

While the formation director gives to each newly professed a copy of the Holy Gospels, the Minister says in these or similar words:

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. By your lifelong profession to go from gospel to life and life to the gospel, may you continually encounter the living and active person of Christ.

Where customary, a crucifix may also be presented as a remembrance of profession. The one presenting the crucifix (ideally a San Damiano Cross) may say in these or similar words:

May you conform your thoughts and deeds to those of Christ and build a more fraternal and evangelical world by fulfilling your vocation as a "brother (sister) of penance."

Where it is also customary to present the newly professed with a lighted candle and/or with a Franciscan ring, the one giving the symbols may say in these or similar words:

For the candle—

By your profession, you are the light of Christ in the world. Your light must shine before all so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.

For the ring—

You have been made a living member of the Church in Baptism; you have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Through this special covenant of union, may you be a faithful witness and instrument of her mission among all people.

After all the presentations, the members present may come forward to congratulate each newly professed with an appropriate sign of peace and goodwill. Meanwhile, a suitable hymn may be sung.

Conclusion of the Rite of Profession

The rite concludes with the General Intercessions. These may be prepared and presented by representatives of the whole fraternity.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

While a hymn is sung at the Presentation of the Gifts, some of the newly professed members may appropriately present the bread, wine, and water for the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Other symbols signifying the commitment to the gospel life within the Secular Franciscan Order may also be presented.

Where appropriate, it is fitting to mention the newly professed by name in the Eucharistic Prayer, according to a formula similar to that used at religious professions.

At Communion, it is recommended that the Eucharist be received under both species.

At the end of the Mass, the Solemn Blessing may be similar in form to those given for formula A, and formula B of the Mass for Religious Profession or it may be the traditional blessing of St. Francis:

> **May the Lord bless you and keep you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May almighty God bless you,**
> **+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**
> All: **Amen.**

CHAPTER FOUR

Rite of Temporary Commitment to the Gospel Life (and Annual Renewal)

This rite for temporary commitment is used after the time of formation and for the annual renewal of that commitment.

At least the Minister of the fraternity and two witnesses must be present. It is very appropriate, however, that the whole fraternity take part in this rite as much as possible.

The rite is to be performed within some kind of liturgical celebration and in a very simple way (see Preface, 3.18). It is not recommended that this rite take place during the Eucharist.

If the rite is performed within a celebration of the Word of God, the readings may be taken from Appendix I. 1.

Admonition Before the Rite

Before the celebrant proceeds to the temporary commitment or its renewal, he addresses those present in these or similar words:

> **Moved by the power of the gospel, we all experience the call always to begin again and to bring about a continuing inner conversion, so that we may be conformed to Christ and with him be given over to the service of the Father, and of our brothers and sisters as well. In this journey toward permanent commitment, perseverance is a gift of God. Let us pray, therefore, that, as we make progress in loving one another, we will remain faithful to the end.**

After a moment of silence, all reply:

O Lord,
look kindly upon those whom you have called
to the holiness of gospel life
in the Secular Franciscan Order.
Grant them the grace
to fulfil their commitment to the gospel life
which they have embraced with spirit and generosity.
This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Temporary Commitment and Its Renewal

Those making or renewing temporary commitment approach the Minister of the fraternity, saying:

I, N.N.,
make (or renew) for one year
my commitment to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,
after the example of St. Francis of Assisi,
according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

The Minister responds to each one in these or similar words:

As the Minister of the fraternity, I accept your temporary commitment (or renewal of commitment) to the gospel life. All our brothers and sisters unite with you in thanking God for this gift.

When all the commitments have been made, the celebrant adds these words of St. Francis:

May whoever observes all this
be filled in heaven with the blessing
of the most high Father,
and on earth with that of his beloved Son,
together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,
and all the powers of heaven and all the saints.

Conclusion of the Rite

The rite concludes with the General Intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, and the following prayer by the celebrant:

> **Hear our prayers, O Lord,**
> **and grant that these, our brothers and sisters,**
> **who spend their daily lives**
> **in the service of others,**
> **may imbue their earthly affairs**
> **with a genuine gospel spirit.**
> **We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**
>
> All: **Amen.**

The rite may fittingly end with the Blessing of St. Francis:

> **May the Lord bless you and keep you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
> All: **Amen.**
>
> May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May the Lord bless you,**
> **+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**
> All: **Amen.**

CHAPTER FIVE

Ceremony on the Anniversary of Profession

It is a praiseworthy custom to celebrate the 25th and the 50th anniversary of profession in the Secular Franciscan Order, both to congratulate the jubilarians for their fidelity and dedication and also to strengthen the bonds of fraternal life within the community.

If this jubilee is celebrated within the context of the Eucharist, the Mass corresponding to the liturgy of the day may be said, with the prayers "In Thanksgiving," according to the rubrics. Also, the votive Mass of St. Francis, of the patron saints of the Secular Franciscan Order, or the Mass for Laity may be used.

The Jubilee may also take place during the Liturgy of the Hours or a special celebration of the Word of God.

Admonition after the Homily

After the homily, the Minister of the fraternity or one of the other members present introduces the jubilee ceremony. It would be appropriate to compose a special text for the occasion using the following as a model:

> **Today with great joy we are celebrating the 25th (and/or 50th) anniversary of N.N. in the Secular Franciscan Order. During these years, they have made a sincere effort "to make present the charism of their common seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church" and to build "a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively." Let us, therefore, join in their thanksgiving and in their commitment to an ongoing change of heart.**

Renewal of Commitment

The jubilarians come forward to renew their commitment, either singly or as a group. It would be appropriate if a particular statement of renewal were composed, using the following as a model:

"Let us bless our Lord and God, living and true;
to him, we must attribute
all praise, glory, honour, blessing,
and every good forever."

We thank you, Lord, for calling us
to the Secular Franciscan Order.
We ask your pardon
for all our shortcomings,
weaknesses and transgressions
against our commitment to the gospel life
and against the Rule.

We pray that you will allow us to experience once again
the fervour and readiness of that first day
when we entered the fraternity.

We renew once again our commitment to the gospel life,
according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order,
until the end of our days.
Grant also that we may live in harmony
with our brothers and sisters,
and may give witness to younger people
of the great gift we received from you:
our Franciscan calling
to "go forth as witnesses and instruments
of the Church's mission among all people,
proclaiming Christ by our life and words."

"All praise be yours, O Lord,
through all that you have made." Amen.

After the renewal of commitment, the celebrant offers a prayer. He may use a text especially composed for the occasion, or he may say in these or similar words:

Lord our God, Father of all,
we thank you for the love and goodwill
that you have shown toward your people.
And so we ask you to help our brothers and sisters
who today celebrate their anniversaries
in the Secular Franciscan Order
to fulfil their commitment to the gospel life
which they once took upon themselves.
"Most high, all powerful, all good, Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing."
forever and ever.
All: **Amen.**

Conclusion

Where time and circumstances permit, the members of the fraternity—or at least some representatives of the fraternity—come forward to offer the jubilarians their congratulations and best wishes. Meanwhile, it is appropriate that a song of thanksgiving and praise be sung, especially St. Francis' "Canticle of the Creatures."

The liturgical celebration continues in the usual manner. If the anniversaries are celebrated within the context of the Eucharist, it is fitting that the jubilarians are involved in the General Intercessions, in the Preparation of the Gifts, etc.

Part II

Prayers for Fraternity Meetings

Preface

Local fraternity gatherings, as well as meetings of Regional, National and International Councils, are held in the Secular Franciscan Order.

The goals of these gatherings and meetings are indicated in the Rule, namely, to promote charity among the members and to foster their Franciscan and ecclesial life.[7]

There are different kinds of gatherings within the Fraternity: sometimes for prayer, other times for planning work or accomplishing projects, and still other occasions for fraternising and socialising.

The following gatherings of the fraternity are required by statute:

a. a time for getting to know one another as brothers and sisters,[8]
b. a time for hearing the Word of God and sharing it,[9]
c. a time for study and work, especially ongoing formation and the apostolate,[10]
d. a time for the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.[11]

In all of these, there is ample room for the creative initiative of the Council and members of the fraternities.

The prayers given here are taken mainly from the writings of St. Francis. The suggested formats are not absolute, but rather are given to help the Council apply their creative energies.

[7] OFS Rule, art. 22 and 24
[8] Ibid., art. 2, 5, 13, 22 and 24.
[9] Ibid., art 4 and 5.
[10] Ibid., art. 14, 22 and 24
[11] Ibid., art. 5 and 8.

CHAPTER ONE

Opening and Closing Prayers for Fraternity Meetings

The prayers suggested below are given only as samples. According to the needs or personality of the fraternity, other prayers may be used. It is always appropriate that the fraternity meeting contain a liturgical celebration, whether the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours.

Opening Prayers

When the members have gathered together in a suitable place before any business is taken up, the Minister of the fraternity may begin the community prayer in a manner similar to this:

Minister:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: **Amen.**

Minister:

Most high, all-powerful, good God,
praise, glory, and honour, and all blessing are yours.

All: Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks, and serve him with great humility.

Minister:

Let us pray (Pause)
All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God,
all good, supreme good, total good,
you who alone are good:
we give you all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honour,
all blessing and every good. So be it. So be it.
All: **Amen.**

or:

Let us pray. (Pause)

Most high, glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of our hearts
and give us right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity,
with wisdom and insight, O Lord,
that we may accomplish your holy and true will.
All: **Amen.**

A short reading can follow with texts from Sacred Scripture (Appendix I. 1), or from the writings of St. Francis (Appendix I. 2). The fraternity meeting continues in the usual fashion.

Closing Prayers

At the end of the fraternity meeting, after a period of shared prayer or General Intercessions for the general needs of the Church and the particular needs of the fraternity, the Minister of the fraternity may use one of the following prayers of St. Francis, or another of his/her own choice, to close the meeting:

Let us pray.
Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God:
grant us in our misery
that we may do for your sake alone
what we know you want us to do,
and always want what pleases you;
so that, cleansed and enlightened interiorly
and fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit,
we may be able to follow in the footsteps of your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
and so make our way to you, Most High,
by your grace alone,
you who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,
and are glorified, God all-powerful, forever and ever.
All: **Amen.**

or:

Let us pray.
Most generous God,
you are the giver of peace and the lover of charity;
grant to us, your people, true harmony with your will,
and help us to overcome all temptations
that could disturb our peace.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

If a priest is present, he may give the Blessing of St. Francis to Brother Leo:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
All: **Amen.**

May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
All: **Amen.**

May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.
All: **Amen.**

May the Lord bless you,
+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen.**

CHAPTER TWO

Prayer for the Regular Meeting of the Council

The following suggested format may be adapted to the needs or desires of the fraternity Council.

Minister:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen.**

Minister:

May the Lord be in our hearts and on our lips,
so that we may live the holy gospel
of our Lord Jesus Christ
in the spirit of St. Francis and proclaim it to all the world.
All: **Amen.**

Minister:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people.
All: **Enkindle in us the spirit of dedication and unity.**

Minister:

Confirm, O Lord, the work you are doing through us.
All: **May we be instruments of peace in your Church and in the world.**

Minister:

Let us pray. (*Pause, then say together:*)

O Lord, you have called us
to serve the Secular Franciscan Fraternity as its leaders.
Through our good example, wise decisions,
and courageous action
may we faithfully animate and guide our fraternity
in observing the gospel in the spirit of St. Francis.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

Sacred Scripture: A reading from Sacred Scripture or from the Writings of St. Francis, follows, after which there may be a silent meditation or a shared reflection which applies the message of the reading to the situation at hand.

The Ordinary Business of the Council now takes place.

Shared Prayer: At the end of the meeting, Shared Prayer or General Intercessions, can assist in praying about the matters dealt with during the meeting.

The Our Father: The Minister of the fraternity initiates the Our Father and then concludes with a prayer from the writings of St. Francis (see the Opening and Closing Prayers for Fraternity Meetings) or says in these or similar words:

> **Let us pray.** (*Pause, then say together:*)
>
> **O God, without you, nothing is strong, nothing is holy.**
> **Inspire us with your wisdom and love.**
> **Under your direction and guidance**
> **may we prove to be worthy leaders of this fraternity;**
> **may we see what we should do,**
> **and have the courage and perseverance to accomplish it.**
> **We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

The Spiritual Assistant concludes with a blessing:

> **May the Lord bless you and keep you.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**
> All. **Amen.**
>
> **May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**
> All: **Amen.**
>
> **May the Lord bless you, + the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**
>
> All: **Amen.**

CHAPTER THREE

Celebration of the Fraternity's Chapter of Elections

These prayers supplant the ordinary prayers for the fraternity meeting.

Ordinarily, the Minister of the higher level of fraternity, or his/her delegate, presides at the elections and confirms them.

After the invocation of the Holy Spirit:

O Holy Spirit, giver of all things good,
grant we beseech thee Your blessings on this election.
Help us to make wise choices in the brothers and sisters
we choose to lead us into the future.
Increase in us faith, hope, and charity and bring forth in all of us
the virtues proper to the state in life to which You have called us.
Increase in us our love for each other
and the ability to see Jesus in all people.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen

and a short reading from the Sacred Scripture (Appendix I. 1): or from the writings of St. Francis (Appendix I. 2) or from some other appropriate source, with perhaps a reflection or meditation, following. The one presiding at the elections now offers a prayer in these or similar words:

Almighty, most high and supreme God,
Father, holy and just,
Lord, King of heaven and earth:
we give you thanks for yourself.
Of your own will
you created all things spiritual and physical,
made us in your own image and likeness,
and gave us a place in Paradise,
through your only Son, in the Holy Spirit.
We trust in you, and we ask for your light
so that we may choose those
who will properly serve our fraternity
through their leadership.
Help us to select those who are able
to animate and guide us
by their example, their virtues and prudent decisions,
so that the gospel of Jesus in the spirit of St. Francis
may come alive in our community.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

The elections follow in accordance with the General Constitutions and the particular Statutes of a National or Regional fraternity.

After each election, that is, of the Minister, vice-Minister, and Council members together, the Secretary of the elections says:

In the name of Christ. Amen. I announce that the new elected Minister (or Vice-Minister or Council members) of …… Fraternity is (are) N.N.

The newly elected come(s) forward and the one presiding at the elections asks:

N.N., do you accept this election?

The newly elected person respond(s):

Yes, I do.

The one presiding then says in these or similar words:

In the name of the Church and the Franciscan Family, I confirm the election of N.N. as the Minister or vice - Minister or Council members) of ……..Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.

At the end of the election process, a hymn of thanksgiving may be sung. The concluding prayers for the election may be said now, or they may be said in the context of a liturgical celebration, after the homily.

The newly elected Minister recites the Creed in the name of the whole Council:

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; on the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

All the newly elected Council members give witness together to their Franciscan calling and to their readiness to be of service. Each may use his/her own words, or they may use the following text as a model:

We, the Council members of……Fraternity, accept this responsibility and service of leadership. Before Almighty God, we promise to live daily the gospel life in the spirit of our seraphic father St. Francis and to exercise our new ministry to the best of our ability. We ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of this fraternity so that together as the Family of Francis we may witness to the gospel, may be instruments of peace, and may build a more fraternal and evangelical world, so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.

Afterward, the one presiding at the elections says:

May the God of hope
bring you such joy and peace in your faith
that the power of the Holy Spirit
will remove all bounds to hope. (Rom 15:13)

All: **Blessed be God forever.**

The one presiding continues in these or similar words:

Let us pray for those who have been elected:
Through their service of animating
and guiding the fraternity,
may we all live our faith more deeply,
witness to Christ more bravely,
and work to prepare the Kingdom of God
more enthusiastically.

After a moment of silence -
all join in a common prayer. It may be one specially composed for the occasion or one modelled on the following:

Most generous Father, grant
that through the dedicated efforts of our new leaders
who have been called to serve our fraternity,
all of us may know you better,
and make you known to all.
May we live more vigorously the gospel way of life
that you inspired through Francis of Assisi.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

If time and circumstances permit, the newly elected Minister and Council may stand in front of the community, and each member may come forward to offer congratulations. (Photos can be taken at this time.)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Establishment of a New Fraternity

This rite is to be celebrated in a suitable place, usually the church or chapel associated with the new fraternity.

The one who has the faculty to establish the fraternity canonically, or his delegate, presides at the ceremony.

Introduction

After an opening hymn, a word of welcome and a brief introduction from the Minister of the fraternity, Article 22 of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order is read:

> **The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order, and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.**

Then the one presiding at the establishment of the new fraternity offers a prayer in these or similar words:

> **Let us pray. (Pause)**
>
> **We give you praise and thanks,**
> **O Lord our God.**
> **As we gather here in your name,**
> **may our lives together in fraternity**
> **help us to experience the presence of your Son,**
> **our Lord Jesus Christ,**
> **and to proclaim that presence to the world**
> **by the power of your Holy Spirit,**
> **so that our joy in St. Francis may come to fulfilment.**
> **We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**
> All: **Amen.**

Liturgy of the Word

First Reading (Rom 12:4-13 “We form one body”)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans:

Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it, we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your gift is prophecy, then use it as your faith suggests; if administration, then use it for administration; if teaching, then use it for teaching. Let the preachers deliver sermons, the almsgivers give freely, the officials be diligent, and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully.

Do not let your love be a pretence; but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with a great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come, and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need, you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Responsorial Psalm (105 [106]: 1, 2-3, 47, 48)

R. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good:
for his love is without end.

Who can tell the Lord’s mighty deeds?
Who can recount all his praise?
They are happy who do what is right;
who at all times, do what is just. **R.**

O Lord, our God, save us!
Gather us from among the nations
that we may thank your holy name
and make it our glory to praise you. **R.**

Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel,
for ever, from age to age.
Let all the peoples cry out:
"Amen!" **R.**

Verse Before the Gospel (Col 3:15)

> **May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, that peace to which all of you are called as one body.**

Gospel Reading (John 17:20-26 "That all may be one")

A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to John:

Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, saying:
"Holy Father,
I pray not only for these,
but for those also
who through their words, will believe in me.
May they all be one.
Father, may they be one in us,
as you are in me and I am in you,
so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.
I have given them the glory you gave to me,
that they may be one as we are one.
With me in them and you in me,
may they be so completely one
that the world will realise that it was you who sent me
and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.
Father,
I want those you have given me
to be with me where I am,
so that they may always see the glory
you have given me

because you loved me
before the foundation of the world.
Father, Righteous One,
the world has not known you,
but I have known you,
and these have known
that you have sent me.
I have made your name known to them
and will continue to make it known,
so that the love with which you love me may be in them,
and so that I may be in them."

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

A homily may follow.

Reading and Signing of the Document of Establishment

The document of the establishment of the new fraternity is now formally read and signed by the one presiding at the establishment and by the properly designated witnesses.
The one presiding then reads the names of the members of the newly established fraternity, and gives the names of the leaders who constitute the Council of the new fraternity.

Then an exhortation is read from the writings of St. Francis (see Appendix I. 2). For example:

> **We are spouses [of our Lord Jesus Christ] when the faithful soul is joined to [Him] by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father, who is in heaven. We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to Him through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example.**
>
> **Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! O, how holy, consoling, beautiful, and**

wondrous it is to have such a Spouse! Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave up life for His sheep and who prayed to the Father saying: "O Holy Father, protect those in your name whom you have given to me in the world."

(1 Letter to All the Faithful, 8-14)

On this occasion, some appropriate words can be offered either by the one presiding at the establishment or by a Regional or National leader present.

Prayer and Conclusion

After shared prayer or General Intercessions, the one presiding concludes with a prayer, either composed for the occasion or modelled on the following:

Our Father, Almighty God, source of love and unity:
grant that this new fraternity
of the Secular Franciscan Order,
united and animated by the Holy Spirit,
may be ready to hear your Word and keep it.
May all its members pray together
with one mind and heart.
May they find in the community
the strength and inspiration
to bring about a more fraternal and evangelical world
and to carry the message of joy and peace to everyone.
This we ask through Christ our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

The priests present may give their blessing, especially in the form of St. Francis' blessing to Brother Leo:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
All: **Amen.**

May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
All: **Amen.**

May he look upon you with kindness and give you peace.
All: **Amen.**

May almighty God bless you,
+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen**

It is appropriate to conclude with a hymn to Our Lady.

CHAPTER FIVE

Prayer for the Pastoral or Fraternal Visit

At the time of the pastoral or fraternal visit of the fraternity (OFS Rule, art. 26), these prayers would ordinarily supplant the prayers for a regular fraternity meeting.

After the customary greeting and an Invocation of the Holy Spirit, the visitor offers an opening prayer, either in a form particularly prepared for the occasion or one modelled on the following:

We praise and thank you,
O Lord our God,
for through your love and wisdom
you have called us to holiness
through the Franciscan way of life.
Through your grace and inspiration
you have provided for us the means
to promote fidelity to the Franciscan charism,
to observe the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order,
and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity.
By the power of your Holy Spirit
we have come together today
for this pastoral (and/or fraternal) visit,
in order to evaluate our efforts
and to renew our dedication
to live the holy gospel of your Son
in the footsteps of St. Francis.
We ask for your blessing and guidance
so that this occasion may help us
to appreciate our vocation more deeply,
to embrace it more enthusiastically,
and to share it more fully with one another
and with all people.
Give us the fullness of your Spirit.
Take full possession of our hearts;
root out of them attitudes of selfishness and false fear.

Give us the will to persevere,
as followers of St. Francis in the contemporary world,
in rebuilding the Church and
in proclaiming the Good News of salvation.
Where we have faltered or even failed,
give us the strength to begin anew,
the light to discover our true meaning and purpose,
and the courage to move forward
with conviction and humility.
"May the power of your love, O Lord,
fiery and sweet as honey,
wean our hearts from all that is under heaven,
so that we may die for love of Jesus' love,
who was so good as to die for love of our love."
This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.
All: **Amen.**

A reading from Sacred Scripture or the writings of St. Francis (see Appendix I. I and 2), with a reflection or meditation, follows.

The visit is carried out in the customary fashion. At the end of the visit, after shared prayer or General Intercessions, the visitor concludes with a prayer composed for the visit or with these or similar words:

Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel!
You have visited your people and redeemed them.
Stir up your Spirit in us.
As we 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 you
and your people,
keep us faithful to the Rule
of the Secular Franciscan Order.
We ask this in Jesus' name and for his sake.
All. **Amen**.

The visitor may conclude with a scriptural exhortation. For example: (1 Thes 5:13-18, 23)

We beg you:
Be at peace among yourselves.
This is what we ask you to do:
warn the idlers,
give courage to those who are apprehensive,
care for the weak,
and be patient with everyone.
Make sure that people do not try to take revenge;
you must all think of what is best for each other
and for the community.
Be happy at all times;
pray constantly;
and for all things give thanks to God,
because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.
May the God of peace make you perfect and holy;
and may you all be kept safe and blameless,
spirit, soul, and body,
for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The priests present may give their blessing, especially in the form of St. Francis' blessing to Brother Leo:

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
All: **Amen.**

May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.
All: **Amen.**

May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.
All: **Amen.**

May the Lord bless you,
+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
All: **Amen.**