

## *Yes, This is What I Want!*

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“This [the Fraternity] should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.”

OFS Rule, article 22

“Insertion into a local fraternity and participation in fraternal life is essential for belonging to the Secular Franciscan Order.”

OFS Constitutions – article 53.3

“There is no doubt here that Profession will be a sacrifice if it is taken seriously.”

For Up To Now (FUN) Formation Manual, Profession page 11.

“These are the things that should make a Secular Franciscan think twice before absenting themselves from Fraternity gatherings, Regional events, not accepting nominations for various offices, etc. Lest we are left to our own devices in living out the

Profession, we should remember that in the act of making those promises, we hold out our hands so that the Lord may take hold of them. We will never be alone on that journey.”

For Up To Now (FUN) Formation Manual, Profession page 12.

Whether we were professed under the Pauline OFS Rule of 1978, or earlier under the Leonine Rule, one thing is constant...we were professed into a fraternity to live out our Secular Franciscan vocation. We were not professed to live our lives on our own, but by our Profession, we have joined a Fraternity, a family, who will always be there to journey with us on our path to God.

From the quotes above, most of you can guess what my topic for writing is today! would like to discuss fraternal life. Do you believe that your Fraternity is a “privileged place” where you gather with your Fraternity members to build the Kingdom of God? Do you believe your “participation in fraternal life is essential”? In this day of speed and technology, our Profession calls us to a more meaningful way of life. A life full of employment, children or grandchildren, commitments to others and promises to keep. Because Secular Franciscans live out their vocation in the secular world where God placed us, we are

forever into the nitty-gritty of life circumstances and we are faced with never-ending choices of happenings that take up, and make up, our world.

As I have heard before, we live in the messiness of the world. But that's just it, isn't it? CHOICES. We prioritize, shift, arrange and rearrange the choices in our lives to suit us best. Where is the priority of your Profession, and your Fraternity? Is it on the bottom of the "when I have time" list, or is it near the top of the "in Your will Father" list.

No one forced us to make those promises during our Profession. We clearly stated when asked, "This is what I want!" We asked our Lord to accept us as a sacrifice, we asked our Church to accept our promises, and we asked our Fraternity to accept us as a fellow journeyer on the road to God's Kingdom.

If this is all true, then why are we too busy to attend Fraternity gatherings? Or we attend, but leave early? Why do we not prepare for the On-Going Formation session and think that we can "just wing it"? Or too involved with other groups to prepare for our gathering by doing the readings or questions for the Formation session? Why are we too inexperienced to run for office when asked? Why is it so easy to come up with excuses for us not fulfilling our duties and obligations as a Secular Franciscan?

We as a Fraternity, and as an Order, need to refocus. We need to refocus on why we professed into the Secular Franciscan Order, what that Profession means to us, and how we are going to live out that Profession in our lives. It is not an easy task. It is certainly not a one-time task! We need to refocus and reprioritize over and over throughout our lives. But the one steady thing in our lives is our Profession. We cannot continue to put it last on our list, not can we put it low on our priority list.

What does this mean? It means that there may be times that you have to tell your family or friends that you cannot attend their activities, or that you may be late, because their activity is on the day of your OFS Fraternity meeting. It means that you will have to be upfront about being a Secular Franciscan and its obligations when you are planning your calendar. Our Fraternity meeting is not the only gathering that we are obligated to attend. We also need to make a concerted effort to attend the special gatherings and feasts through the year. They are another way of showing solidarity with the larger Regional Fraternity. In today's world, we acknowledge our marital status, our place of employment, our religion and Church of choice, our political parties, and even our hobbies. We need to acknowledge our Franciscan charism and our belonging to an International Order in the Catholic Church!

As you read this article, forgive me for “preaching to the choir”. Maybe this article will be a way to approach the subject of attendance and participation at your Fraternity. Maybe this article will renew and refocus your own participation in Fraternity events. Either way, remember, whatever you may experience or gain from attending, it is a grace from God to enable us to live out our Profession. You may not be attending only for your benefit, but for those with whom you gather!

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