

Fraternity Development: Tips for Growth

Secular Franciscan Fraternities need to grow. One of the best ways to do this is to remember that we are part of the church. Secular Franciscans enhance and support the mission of the church to the whole world. We make ourselves available just like Francis, when the church calls "repair" because there are reconciliations to promote, solitudes to fill, despair to console, material and spiritual poverties to heal, places to catechize, respect for lives (womb to tomb) and environmental issues, etc. This is who we are because we follow in the footsteps of Francis.

Once a real vocation call has been determined, the formation process must provide and reinforce the tools and insights that will lead to true transformation. Transformation is the creation of a new lifestyle.

Formation is vital to the order and vital for all Sisters and Brothers in it, so each one of us must assist in helping those in formation to develop that right understanding in order to be able to embrace Franciscan values and the Franciscan Chrism (Which is a God given gift capable of reshaping a person's way of being for his/her entire life.) Therefore you see formation remains the top priority for the entire order. Promotion of vocations to the Secular Formation is an urgent need.

One of the best ways to do this is to partner with the Adult Formation Program (RCIA). Usually SFO and RCIA do not work together but it is just the place to unite. For example, these people accompanied by a sponsor have been focused for approximately thirty—three weeks upon preparation to join the church family. They now after becoming a member of the church family are seeking a way to integrate into the church family. Where is their niche? What will fill the void that they are feeling?

It is the right time to introduce the RCIA Group to the Secular Franciscan Fraternity. We offer the opportunity to continue to build and grow their Catholic faith. We offer the opportunity to experience God's plan of knowing, learning and serving. We offer companionship for the journey. Take your brochures that tell who you are and what we do. Call attention to anything you are doing in the

church. For example, sponsor a Holy Hour or teach the rosary just to mention two projects. Invite them to a gathering featuring film about Francis or Clare, have a witness from one of the newly professed (if possible). The Adult Formation Director and you may agree, upon your participating in the mystagogy experience which usually last about seven weeks after the RCIA formation program has ended. The one this year was Call and Mission prepared by USCCB. You may even want to be a RCIA Sponsor.

These new Catholics need nurturing for at least a year. They need to learn to establish a pray life. They need to be comfortable in practicing and developing their faith. Now is the time to use the SFO Affiliate Orientation Plan. Its advantage is keeping the person close and focused. At the end of this time you have a choice.

Folks, remember our dual purpose Spirituality and Service.

1. Be prayerful - listen to God- build on pray build on what you are hearing
2. Be active— in order to get you must give. We are not all called to the same kind of service but we are called to serve.
3. Be proud with humility- talk about what you proclaim, wear your Tau, wear your shirt if you have one. Share your joy.

This is my challenge to you, when we come together at the annual gathering next year please have a least two aspirants to your fraternity. Development of our fraternities remains our top priority. We will not live forever but Secular Franciscans must continue forever.

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