

Thoughts about Professions

Some thoughts I would like to share with all of you:

- Franciscan life is not a confirmation of our regular way of thinking, of our biases and prejudices. Conversion means moving out of our comfort zone – learning to think differently, accepting **everyone** as a person loved by God and foundationally good. This means people of different races, different political persuasions, different economic levels, and different sexual orientations. Does every one of your candidates show signs of serious conversion? Can they accept **all** people, different ideas, and use dialogue rather than insist on their position on issues?
- Formation is not built on a calendar. We don't treat profession like we treat graduation. Formation is not completion of a curriculum by a certain date and then profession automatically follows.

NO! Do NOT set the date for profession until everything is complete:

1. **All** the content of The Franciscan Journey and the FUN Manual have been completed. These are **not** options! Remember, Candidacy can go 36 months.
2. Interviews with council.
3. Letters of request for profession addressed to council and accepted by council.
4. Council vote of acceptance.
5. Pre-profession retreat.

Then, **and only then**, do you set the date for and plan for profession.

Remember our candidates are preparing to make a life commitment to a way of life built on fraternity. They are not gaining membership in a club. We are not a club of nice people in which membership is optional and from which we can drop out if things are not to our liking. We are expected to be **active, fraternal Franciscans for the rest of our lives.**

Content for the pre-profession retreat:

- Please use Section 16 in the FUN Manual. This is a presentation by Fr. Richard Trezza, OFM, on the theology and spirituality of our profession – in other words, what profession means. (Profession and the Secular Franciscan: Theological and Liturgical Foundations)
- Copy the section for the candidates, the council members, their mentors and, I hope, for all members of your fraternity. (Why would you deny them this material?) If you haven't read this, they haven't either.
- Give out this section **a month in advance** of the retreat so that everyone can read and pray through the material before the retreat.
- On the day of the retreat, plan a long, deep, and serious discussion of Fr. Trezza's material. That means asking the candidates what struck them in each of the 16 sections and listening to their responses.

- Of course, you can build prayer, lunch, etc. into the day. But please make Fr. Trezza's material the focus. The pre-profession retreat needs to be a very special day attended by all your candidates and your council members. And, you may want to save the council vote until after the retreat.

I hope these suggestions/guidelines are helpful. These are not just my ideas. We discuss all this at the national level at our annual workshops. As one of our popes said to us Franciscans:

*The world needs this Franciscan spirit,
this Franciscan vision of life.
It is expected that you, beloved children,
know it deeply, love it with passion,
and above all, that you live it
with the perfection that your state allows.*
Pope Pius XII

And we are needed NOW!

Please forgive my "emphasis added," but I have seen first-hand the results of thin, minimal formation in our fraternities. It doesn't work. I want the best for all of you and for your fraternities. Please, go deep and give full quality to your candidates. We are in no hurry!!

Peace and all good, Esther

(Submitted by Esther Stewart, OFS Feb. 2020)