

Some thoughts about mentoring (10/24/2019)

I am frequently asked about mentors and ideas for mentoring those in initial formation in our fraternities. PLEASE SHARE WITH THE MENTORS IN YOUR FRATERNITY. Thank you.

In general:

- Mentors need to be active professed members of your fraternity who have enthusiasm and a positive dedication to our way of life.
- Beginning in Inquiry, every person in initial formation needs to have a mentor.
- Mentors may be members of your council. For small fraternities, this is necessary.
 - Note: I have heard concerns about council members not being mentors because they may be influenced when it comes time to vote on candidates for profession. If mentors are truly active with their mentees, this should not be a problem. Council members gain from the wisdom and experience of the mentors. And at least 4 other council members will be voting on candidates.
- Mentors may have more than one mentee. Why not? Again, this may be necessary in small fraternities. Don't stop the action of the Holy Spirit. Right now, I have three mentees, two in my fraternity and one in the mid-west. We have a wonderful time.
- Mentors need to meet regularly with their mentees:
 - At least once a month.
 - Meetings can be by phone. It is not necessary to meet in person. I meet with my mid-west mentee weekly by phone, one hour conversation. We love it!

What does a mentor do?

- A mentor's role is to walk the Franciscan journey with their mentee. That means:
 - Going over their formation material with them. (Do your mentors have copies of your formation material? I hope so.)
 - Attending the formation session with them from time to time.
 - Helping the mentee to develop a contemplative prayer life built on the Gospels. That means mentors are praying with the Gospels daily, yes? (See my notes on prayer that I sent out during the summer.)
 - Discussing and understanding how we live various articles of our Rule.
 - Discussing the Gospel text of the day.
 - Challenging the mentee on applying the various articles of the Rule and Constitutions to their thinking and their lives. (The accompanying Constitution articles to each article of the Rule are found in The Franciscan Journey book. Do your mentors have copies of the book?)
 - Pray the Liturgy of the Hours together. The only way to learn to do it and feel comfortable is to actually **DO** it. Two people can pray aloud together over the phone. I know – three of us have been praying aloud together over the phone nightly for more than a year. We are really getting quite good at it, and we love it.

Responsibilities of a mentor:

- Assists with the formation of the mentee.

- **Listens** to the questions, concerns, and progress of the mentee. This is not a time to lecture or preach. ASK how they are doing, what their concerns are, where they are growing, what is changing for them.
- Challenges the mentee to conversion.
- Looks for “red flags,” that is, signs that a vocation to the SFO is not in place for this person.
- Communicates progress and concerns to the formation director, minister, and/or council as a whole.
- The experience and input of a mentor should be taken into consideration when the council votes to accept or not accept a candidate for formation. Who may know the candidate best? Don’t ignore the wisdom and experience of the mentor!
 - Remember: we make choices for people for profession based on what is for the good of the fraternity.
 - If a mentee shows signs
 - that they are not accepting Franciscan theology or spirituality,
 - that they are not totally committed to our way of life,
 - that they are uncomfortable in the fraternity or with our theology,
 - that they are overcommitted in other areas,
 - that they are unable to live up to fraternity life after profession,
 - that they are expecting the Franciscan way to provide a psychological, emotional, or social safety net for them (in other words, therapy),
 then these may be “red flags” and the mentor should bring these concerns to the formation director.

Finally, value and mentor your mentors.

- One fraternity has an appointed professed member who just directs the activities and connections of the mentors with their mentees. What a great idea!! Let someone else do the work. Delegate! Spread the joy! This is true fraternitas. Yeah!
- Mentoring is an opportunity for growth and conversion on the part of the person doing the mentoring. When we teach, we learn all over again. Anyone who mentors others will be challenged to be a better Franciscan and you will have a very powerful, committed fraternity. Yeah! We like that!!

Please contribute more ideas. Please let us hear from you by sending your thoughts on a “reply to all” message.

Peace and joy.
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