

OEF formation draft chapter 1

What is formation?

Welcome to Formation with the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. It seems good to start your journey with a discussion of what formation is and is not.

Formation is not an intellectual exercise. We expect it to touch your heart as well as your mind. Later Franciscans did admit there was a point to academic learning and, indeed, even founded Franciscan Universities. But St Francis himself, one of the literate people in Assisi, rejected book learning and concentrated on the knowing of God

Formation is not a theological exercise although your knowledge of theology at whatever level that might be may inform your formation journey. In the OEF we have a few who are learned theologians, we have a number of siblings who have studied theology as part of their seminary studies as they work towards ordination (or not), we have some who have had a modicum of formal theological training and some who have had little or none. We are all equal in the eyes of God and in the eyes of the order.

Formation is not counselling. Your formation companion is there to guide you in spiritual formation within the order. If you need therapy you should be looking for it elsewhere from a qualified counsellor or therapist.

Formation is a spiritual journey. A spiritual journey as a Christian, but more particularly a spiritual journey as a Christian who seeks to live their spirituality following the examples of St Francis and St Clare. And even more specifically the journey of Christians seeking to follow Christ after the examples of St Francis and St Clare within the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Formation is a spiritual journey travelled in the company of companions. As a postulant in the OEF you have been matched with a formation companion within the order. You will have a spiritual director from outside the order walking beside you. You will probably have people within your own church or faith community who mentor you, and there may be others.

Formation is a spiritual journey walked with God. Ultimately, he is our guide on our journey and we always pray that our companions are listening to God as they seek to guide us on our way.

Your formation companion and ultimately the formation team will be wanting to see evidence of spiritual growth, a deepening of your Franciscan spirituality and a serious commitment to your rule of life. This means we are expecting you to be open and honest in your reflections.

Formation never ends. In one sense it will as you complete chapter 30 and move on to profession. But in another sense formation will continue. All professed members are expected to avail themselves of formation and spiritual growth opportunities and continue to grow and develop.

“Be(ing) confident of this, that he (God) who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Phil 1 v 6

Writing a first draft of your rule – there is a lot of information about this in your Formation handbook. Read this carefully and then get started on praying and discerning what is to be in your rule.