

FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 154

Eastertide 2025



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A Listener for The OEF



In the move from a Minister and Servant Team to a Council for the Order, the choice was made to blend the role of Chaplin into the Council. Part of the shift included moving to prayerful discernment as a way to seek the Spirit's direction for The Order. Following a method used by the Quakers, we embrace the concept of a Listener and a Scribe to assist in the discernment.

The current Council proposes that we extend the role of a listener to a year round office in the order where the Listener would follow with the Council and the Formation Team as a person who listens as the teams do their work and who give responses and reaction to what they hear. This Listener would be available to all members of The Order to hear concerns and insights and to feed them back to the Council and the Formation Team. The Listener would gather with the Council and Formation Team but would not actively take a role in the work of either team.

The Listener would be selected by Chapter for a term of three years.

The 2025 OEF Chapter & Convocation meets June 19-22.

Those at Chapter will have significant work to do. The first work of Chapter will be discerning the profession of Russ Rohloff, Seaghán Murphy, and Michael Asbury. It will be a wonderful celebration to witness their professions.

Since Br. Louis has reported to the Council that he has discerned that his time as Formation Coordinator is ending, this Chapter will have the task of discerning a new Council and a new Formation Coordinator. The Formation Coordinator will then develop their formation Team. As is our practice, from Thursday evening to noon on Friday the gathered assembly will remain in silence and will seek the Spirit direction in the Selection of the Council. There will be an hour of community discussion in the morning that individuals can choose to join.

At a subsequent session for the Chapter, we will engage in discerning our steps as an Order into the future.

(Continued on page 2)

A Listener For The OEF... continued

This will include the selection of a Formation Coordinator. The current Council will present some names for this role.

At Chapter we will discern the direction of the formation curriculum. The Order has engaged a pilot using the Module approach to the formation curriculum. We will review this method. Two proposals on formation will be presented for consideration along with the statute revisions. These proposals follow in this newsletter (pages 9 & 8). One on the expectations of novices and the discernment of the novice's progress; and the other on the use and revision of the 30 Formation Chapters.

We will then review the reports of the various teams serving the Order along with the Treasurer's report and proposed budget for the coming year.

Convocation this year will focus on members sharing together how each of us are living our rules in the face of the significant changes that are taking place in the United States. These changes are having global implications on multiple levels. Many members of our Order have expressed concern and even distress about what is developing. As an Order, we will gather to reflect on what this means in our lives as Franciscans.

It is going to be a very intense time together. Let us all open our hearts to the direction of the Triune God and their Holy Spirit.



Words From The Servant Council



Chapter 2025 is drawing near! Registration is in full swing. Travel plans have begun. Arch Audio is contracted again this year to provide a quality hybrid C/C for siblings unable to travel this year. Our itinerary is taking shape. Invitations have been emailed to other Franciscan Orders. Please continue to pray for this Council and for an incoming Council, that the Spirit guide us through this process of transition, that those called to serve will accept with open hearts, minds and hands to serve our Order as The Spirit wills.

We have a submission for first consideration, a proposal for a statute change and update. The changes will be underlined and italicized and bold print. This proposal will be posted to our website when we have all of our reports and other documents ready to post. Since we are suggesting a statute change, the Council felt it necessary to get it here in Fiddlesticks (pages 6-8) for us to begin the process of discernment. The Servant Council wish to thank brother Michael V., Juniper and Louis for their collaborative efforts in bringing this to the membership prior to Chapter. A reminder that this is a first consideration, open for discussion and suggested editing when we bring it to the floor at Chapter. Our prayers are with each and every one of you as we all navigate our journey together as an Order.





Lifelong Formation Station

The Lifelong Formation Team tries to enrich the faith journey of postulants, novices and professed in OEF, and other Franciscans and seekers. I sense a connection between our shared faith journeys in Franciscan community, and the Pentecost experience of Acts 2:1-21.

In biblical times, Pentecost was a Jewish festival marking the giving of the Law and it was celebrated fifty days after the ceremony of unleavened bread at Passover. According to (RSV) Acts 2: 1, "...they were all together in one place. ...the rush of a mighty wind filled all the house. ...tongues as of fire resting on each one of them...and they were filled with the Holy Spirit..." vs. 8-11 describes people present from many different countries, including Arabians and people from Asia, all talking at once! v. 11b, "we hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God."

Have you ever been at an OEF Chapter worship Service at the Sign Of Peace time? There is a sound as the 'rush of a mighty wind' and many tongues unleashed, washing over a landscape of hugging humanity. Participants understand each other's language of struggle, and 'tongues of fire' ignite anew in our hearts.

We are weary of the obstacles and challenges we face, on our way to the heart of God and community with Francis, Clare and each other. We find each other and enter dialogue concerning life and action, in the Spirit of Jesus.

OEF principles tie faith and action together and, translated into the language of today, we are DEI embodied. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion burns among us as we tell 'in our own tongues, the mighty works of God'.

Dale Carmen, on behalf of the Lifelong Formation Team

EASTER MESSAGE FROM FAN

"Once, on a Holy Easter Sunday, while he [St. Francis] was staying at a hermitage that was so far from any houses that he could not conveniently go begging, he begged alms from the brothers, like a pilgrim and beggar, mindful of him who that day appeared in the guise of a pilgrim to his disciples while traveling on the road to Emmaus.

"When he had humbly received it, he taught them with sacred eloquence to continually celebrate the Lord's Passover in poverty of spirit, that is, his passing from this world to the Father, passing through the desert of the world like pilgrims and strangers."

(Source: *The Major Legend of Saint Francis, St. Bonaventure, Ch 7.*)

The FAN staff wish you a blessed Easter as we journey through this world as pilgrims together!





Formation Station



In preparation for Chapter, please review the formation materials which can be found on our website Go to OEF resources and Chapter 2025 info, you will find all the information you need in preparation for our upcoming time together.

Also The team is asking that we would pray together on Mondays the following prayer.

O God of the Universe We thank you for your
Love and Presence in our Order.

We Thank you for the gifts of Clare and Francis
who witness to us a way to live the Gospels
in community and charity.

Send to us Siblings to continue the way of life of
our Order of Ecumenical Franciscans
to aid in bringing joy and hope in the world.

We pray for those in formation, their
companions, and the team who supports
their discernment.

Francis and Clare, supported by our community
and witness to the love shared in our way of
life.

Thank you for our calling and the gift to respond.

We ask all this in the name of The One, Who
saves us, Jesus.

Amen.



L-r: Br Ysidro Mohn,
Dustin

On Saturday, March 22nd Postulant Dustin Nguyen, of Fountain Valley California, in the SE quadrant of the Los Angeles Metro Area, traveled northeast to Claremont, directly west of LA at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains [which includes, very appropriately, Mount San Antonio!]. There to welcome him for the Ceremony of his Speaking the Vow of Novice in our little Order was Brother Ysidro Osmundo Sebastian Mohn and his Spouse Michael Tapia, and Franciscan neighbor David DeGenito. The place was the Courtyard of Pilgrim Place, a complex for the Retired, run by the United Church of Christ. In that Courtyard stands a Statue of St. Francis of Assisi, and at its base the Ceremony commenced with the singing of Francis' Prayer, "Make me a channel of your peace...". The texts were Jeremiah 1:4-10, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you..." and Matthew 13:31-34 "The realm of heaven is like...a mustard seed...yeast." Dustin comes to us true in Franciscan spirit, a studier of linguistics, a part of the Ministerial Team at UCC Irvine intending Seminary Training, an actor and ventriloquist by trade, an avid recipient of the wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh, and a practitioner of the disciplines of Tai Chi and Qigong.

Also present were:

Sr. Michele Harnett, Sisters of St. Louis
(Catholic)

Becky Goodwin, Order of Brigid of Kildare,
(ecumenical Benedictine)

Mary Atwood, Third Order of the Society of Saint
Francis (Episcopal)

Mary Elizabeth Moore (theological formation)

Cheryl Brown, Order of Saint Luke (Methodist)

Eric Shafer, (Evangelical Lutheran Church of
America)

(Continued on page 5)

Formation Station... continued

Paul Colbert, Community of Solitude, dispersed Benedictine.

Barbara Troxell (Women of The Grail Ecumenical

Brother Michael Vosler is serving as Brother Dustin's Formation Companion.

Welcome, Dustin!



And Introducing:



Hello!

My name is Will Westerfield and I have been newly granted Postulancy in OEF.

I am a native of Michigan and now work full time as a self-employed software architect and nature photographer. I've been an Episcopalian since I was adopted at the age of 17. I am a Fellow in the Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church and have recently been nominated into the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament.

I am grateful for the folks I've already met and I look forward to meeting more members. Living in Bay City (MI), I am only two towns away from Ron Nuss-Warren who I have had the privilege of meeting in person for several weeks. I will be at the June Convocation in St. Louis. I've long explored many different expressions of religious life in the Anglican Communion and the Roman Catholic Church.

My first formal association was made at St. Gregory's Abbey in Three Rivers (Michigan). In 1997 I joined the Confraternity of the Abbey with promises to incorporate Benedictine spirituality in my own life and supporting the Abbey in ways as I can. Without the almost three decades of semi-annual retreats at the Abbey, I am not certain I could live as a dispersed religious. Some of my hobbies include cooking (I do breads and pastas from scratch), camping, cycling, hiking, kayaking, reading and keeping up with a few TV shows.

Again, I look forward to getting to know each of you! Blessings during this Easter season as we quickly reach the miracle of Easter

Pax et Bonum,
Will Westerfield

Welcome, Will!

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE OEF STATUTES*

Proposed to be considered at Chapter 2025 by Michael Vosler, Juniper Robertson, and Louis Canter,
(not assuming agreement on all)

*Amendments are in **Red** for color print, italicized, **bold** and underlined to be distinguished in B/W print. The remainder is transcribed from the current Statutes from 2024. The intent of this document:*

- 1) To reflect the current consensus of word use and practice.
- 2) To reflect and clarify the membership status of Seekers and to drop the term "Novice-by-Transfer".
- 3) To fill out and clarify the why and how of release from each stage of formation and membership.

ARTICLE V - POSITIONS OF SERVICE

B. Other Positions of Service

1. Selection of Council

a. Office of Formation:

- v. The Formation Coordinator **or the receiver of applications** directly notifies the Fellowship Coordinator with the names, locations and contact information of serious inquiries and those entering into Formation to facilitate face-to-face with Order members and to encourage participation in local and Regional gatherings.

- vi. **The Fellowship Coordinator shares that information with the Fellowship Team.**

- vii. The Formation Coordinator provides the symbols marking transitions to Postulancy, to Novitiate, **to Seekers**, and to Profession...

2. Appointments made by the Formation Coordinator

- b. The Formation Coordinator matches each Postulant, Novice, **and Seeker** with an individual Formation ~~Counselor~~ **Companion** for accompaniment on the journey towards Profession.

**Editor's note: I recommend having a copy of the current Statutes handy while reviewing this.*

ARTICLE VI. MEMBERSHIP

Introduction: **Propose underlining the 2nd sentence:**

"The entire community is engaged in this process of growth and formation."

A. Inclusion:

The Membership of the OEF consists of those who have made vows as Professed or as Novices, **or as Seekers**, ...

B. Disciplines

C. Signs of Membership:

The vows spoken by Novices is ceremoniously received by one or more assembled Professed OEF members, or to the Professed of another Franciscan Order. If absolutely necessary, remoteness may occasion the vow be spoken virtually with as much assemblage on the speaking and receiving ends as can be mustered. The giving and receiving of the Tau cross will occur as appropriate to the circumstances.

1. Professed

2. Novice Members: Novice Members receive a Tau cross upon Novicing, and may use the monogram "n/OEF" after one's name.

3. **Seekers: Seekers may receive a Tau cross or continue to use one in their possession if deemed appropriate by a member of the Formation Team.**

D. Journey into Membership

1. Inquiry

2. Postulancy: Postulancy is an initial period of affirmation lasting at least six months as an exploration of membership in The OEF

(Continued on page 7)

Proposed Amendments... continued

a. Formation

i. Upon completion of entry requirements, one may be received into the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans as a Postulant. Each Postulant is assigned a Formation ~~Counselor~~/**Companion**. The Postulant will reflect monthly with the Formation ~~Counselor~~/**Companion** and **participate in the Postulant Modules.**

ii. The Postulant is expected to continue in the disciplines outlined in VI - B.

iii. **Postulants may be released at the request of the Formation Team in Consultation with the Formation ~~Counselor~~/Companion. No further communication or action is necessary.**

3. The Novitiate **and Seekers constitute** the first stage of **vowed membership** in The OEF.

a. **For the Novice, formation may last for a period anywhere from two to five years, which begins with a ceremony for speaking the vow of a Novice entering into membership in The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.**
Formation continues with monthly reflections with one's Formation ~~Counselor~~/**Companion and participation in the appropriate modules and cohorts under the direction of the Formation Team, and use of the 30 chapters as decided by recent Chapter gatherings. If after five years the novitiate is not completed with a discernment to make a profession of a life vow, the Novice and current Formation ~~Counselor~~ Companion and a member of the Formation**

Team will gather to discern among three options:

- 1. To extend the novitiate for two years with the Novice making an earnest commitment to fulfill the requirements as fully as possible as stated to become a professed member of the order.**
- 2. To extend the novitiate for that period with a different Formation Counselor/Companion.**
- 3. To terminate the novitiate, with the option of resuming the novitiate at another time after a six month interval and a firm commitment to meet the requirements for profession, and with a one year review of progress that could discern permanent termination.**

Scratch 3 - a - ii. And put the Content in #4 Profession:

Seekers:

Seekers transferring or returning

a. Initial Dialogue

b. Entry Requirements

c. For the transferring Seeker, the period of formation is considered to be a period of transition. Its length of time will be at the determination of the Formation Team and the Formation Counselor/Companion and the consent of the Council, and will include reflections on their previous experiences towards becoming a member of their former Order, registering contrasts and similarities between that Order and the OEF, **participation in Modules and Cohorts under the direction of the Formation Team, and the use of the 30 chapters as decided by the Formation Team and the Formation Counselor/Companion.**

d. For the returning OEF Seeker, re-entry will vary with the circumstances of departure as a Novice,

(Continued on page 8)

Proposed Amendments... continued

the time that has passed, life changes that have happened, and the circumstances that suggest a return to The Order is a divinely guided life imperative.

- e. The vows spoken by Seekers, newly spoken or renewed, are ceremonially received by one or more assembled professed OEF members, or to the professed of another Franciscan Order. If absolutely necessary, remoteness may occasion the vow be spoken virtually with as much assemblage on the speaking and receiving ends as can be mustered. The giving and receiving of the Tau cross will occur as appropriate to the circumstances.

6. Release from Vows

a. Novice Members:

- i. The Request for Release: Any Novice who wishes to be released from vows should consult with the Council, the Formation Coordinator and with their Formation Counselor/Companion.
- ii. Following the consultation, the Novice may be released from vows by the Formation Team and the Order Membership so informed.

iii. Release for an Emergency Cause: Should the Formation Team discern, with input from the Novice's Formation Companion that a Novice needs to be released from vows for cause due to legal concerns, potential harm to members of The Order or to the Novice, or an apparent or real threat to the Order itself, the Formation team may actualize an immediate release of said Novice. The Formation Coordinator will inform the Council of that release, and make the release known to the Professed stating the fact of release and if felt appropriate by the Formation Team, the cause of release. Said novice is declared no

longer a member of the Order. Interactions with the Novice may be curtailed as advice to the Professed and perhaps to other Novices.

- iv. Release due to Lapsed Engagement: When it appears that a member of the Order in formation as a Novice or Seeker appears disinterested in the formation process itself, or in taking the next step in their formation, the Formation Team will widen their inquiry to include members of The Order who share Geographic proximity with the apparently lapsed member, or those known to share OEF activities with that member, and/or those who have served as friends of The Order if such can be ascertained. Should it then be the discernment of the Formation Companion and the Formation Team that the member appears to be truly lapsed or not a good fit at this time, no active movement has been made, no communication during the grace time allowed for the Postulant, Novice or Seeker has been made, and/or the Novice or Seeker has become inactive without any sort of communication and is unresponsive to attempted communication, and given that the Formation Team has overseen this person's journey from application through to this time, the Formation Team shall inform the Council of their intended action to release said member and register their response, then inform all Professed members of the Order of the intended action. A week after such notification of the Professed, the Formation Team shall release said member Novice or Seeker.

Draft of The Preface to The OEF Formation Manual

April 2025



By Michael Vosler, OEF and Juniper Robertson, OEF



The Order confirms that the central focus of formation is the discernment by the Postulant/Novice/Seeker of the essence, the people, the spirit and polity of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. Towards that end, the pace of the formation process is always at the will of those on the formation journey, in consultation with their formation companion. The cohorts and modules offered along the way constitute invitations to take the next step in the discernment process towards Profession of a life-vow. During the formation process the professed Formation Companion will keep the appropriate Formation Team member advised at least quarterly of the success and challenges and projected future of the shared formation journey.

What constitutes **active formation on the part of a postulant, seeker and novice:**

- 1) Continual communication with their formation companion, the formation team and/or the formation coordinator.
- 2) Completion of modules
- 3) Accountable attendance to cohort meetings
- 4) In-person attendance to Chapter/Convocation prior to that of Profession if at all possible. If not possible, special arrangements need to be made with the cooperating Regional Fellowship.
- 5) Regular meetings with a Spiritual Director, and reported to one's Formation Companion. If possible, a conversation between the Spiritual director and the Formation Companion near the beginning of the formation process and just prior to profession is recommended.
- 6) Updating and reporting a Rule of Life with their formation companion
- 7) Participation in the various opportunities for OEF gatherings and activities, as well as other

Franciscan happenings such as the Franciscan Action Network's "justice circles" or an event held by local or on-line 1st, 2nd and 3rd Franciscan Orders.

- 8) Be responsible and accountable. A monthly check-in is required with their Formation Companion. Those engaged in the formation process are asked to be responsible and accountable to the promptings of the Holy Spirit concerning this formation journey, and to share discernments with the OEF Companion or directly to the Formation Team. If questions arise concerning the formation process or felt-need to pause, the Formation Companion is present to you to pursue an answer or to help shape a resolution.

The Formation Team Responsibilities:

- 1) Answer the doorbell of an inquirer
- 2) Guide the inquirer, seeker or postulant through the beginning processes of getting them familiar with the order, it's prelude and principals and walking them through the initial requirements to become a Postulant or a Seeker
- 3) Find a good Formation Companion match with the Postulant or Seeker
- 4) Have routine check-ins between the Formation Companions and the Formation Team on how the Postulant, Novice or Seeker is **actively** progressing through the above mentioned formation process
- 5) Have the Formation Companion report to the team immediately when a concern arises about their Postulant, Novice or Seeker allowing for opportunities for individual pastoral care that might be needed. How can we help?

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Draft of the Preface... continued

- 6) Allow grace periods of 6 month intervals for “time out” for the Postulant, Novice or Seeker to discern their continuance or their need to be on pause for personal reasons, with the understanding for monthly check-ins. Again, how can we help?
- 7) Postulants may be released by the Formation Team in consultation with the Formation Companion. No further communication or action is necessary.
- 8) When it appears that a member of the Order in formation is not taking steps to profession, the Formation Team will:
- widen their inquiry to include members of the Order who share geographic proximity with the member, and/or
 - those known to share OEF activities with that member,
 - and/or those who have served as friends in the Order.

Should it be then discerned by Formation Companion and the Formation Team that the member has lapsed or is asking the Order to be something it is not and that there has been no active movement towards profession, the Formation Team shall: a. consult with the Council regarding the intent release the member b. will inform all Professed members of the Order of the intended action. A week after the notification of the Professed, the Formation Team shall release Novice or Seeker.



Franciscan Easter Prayer

God of love, thank you for the gift of love that you give us in Jesus. Help us to see with eyes of faith, to feel with hearts of love, and to act intentionally so that we may live in the abundant hope of the resurrection. As we celebrate the joy of Easter, may we be reminded of the promise that justice will triumph over injustice, light will overcome darkness, and love will conquer death. We pray that we may be changed and transformed to be messengers of Easter joy and hope, living out the Franciscan ideals of service, compassion, and care for creation. May we strive to be neighbor to all those we meet, particularly the poor, the marginalized, and the least among us. We ask your special blessings each and every day on our communities and leaders, that we may work together to build a world filled with peace and justice. We pray in Jesus' name, our risen Lord forever. Amen.

A Blessed Easter Season to you all!

**Your humble Servant Council
Author of this prayer: Unknown.**



Image: Pinterest: iStock by Getty Images

2025 OEF Chapter and Convocation Registration

Wed. June 18th - Sun. June 22nd at Pallotine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO, US (Wed. arrival optional)

Please Print Name _____ Pronouns _____

Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Will you be joining us by Zoom? ____No ____Yes

What time zone? _____

If joining us In-person please continue to fill out this form.

Arrival day: ____ Wed. ____ Thurs.

Arriving by: ____ Car ____ Bus ____ Train ____ Plane

Are you interested in joining some of us in community service on Thurs.? __Yes__ No

If arriving by bus, train or plane, send as soon as possible the time of arrival and which carrier.

Room: _____ Standard room is a single room with 2 twin beds _____ Couple's room with a queen bed

Would you be willing to share a standard room? __No __Yes With whom?

Other room needs:

Food: __Vegetarian __Vegan __Carnivore ____ Gluten Free ____ Lactose Free

Food Allergies:

Communion: ____Wine ____Grape Juice ____ Gluten Free Bread

Emergency contact person and cell phone number:

General info:

Are there Allergies that we might need to know?

Are there any physical accommodations that we need to know about to provide a better experience at C/C?

Is there anything else you want us to know?

A NOTE FROM YOUR TREASURER ON CHAPTER/CONVOCATION COSTS

I, your beloved OEF Treasurer, will send you an INVOICE for Chapter/Convocation registration fees "sometime" after you register. (And in no particular hurry on my part. Please be patient.) That invoice will tell you how you can pay. And how much.

But you should know now what you are getting into. These are the registration fees:

\$25 for Zoom participation

\$140 for early (Wednesday) arrival in-the-flesh

\$110 for Thursday arrival in-the-flesh

Zoom registration gives you a Zoom link. (No surprise there.) In-person (in-the-flesh) registrations provide room and meals. Either way, a stunning deal.

Thanks to everyone for your generosity to OEF throughout the year, via your regular contributions. It is that support that allows OEF to offer Chapter/Convocation registration at such dramatically reduced rates. (Our real expenses, for both in-person and Zoom participation, are about \$500/person.)

Blessings,

Nancy Menning, oef



OEF Online Bible Study

This is a recurring meeting every Thursday. Each week's Bible reading will be announced on the OEF-Chat.

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708pwd=N2R0THcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdGdEF0QT09>

Meeting ID: 897 6071 8708 - Password - oef

7:30-8:30 PM ET,

6:30-7:30 PM CST,

5:30-6:30 PM MST

5:30-6:30 PM Arizona

4:30-5:30 PM PST,

7:30-8:30 PM Ecuador

1:30 pm -1:30 PM Friday in New Zealand

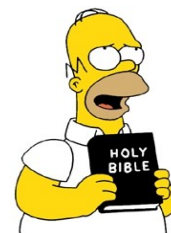
12:30 m -1:30 AM Friday in Ireland

9:30-10:30 AM Friday in Japan

You will need a computer or a smart phone with a headset (and a camera would be good) to participate. I will give a brief ZOOM tutorial as we meet, and I can help people before the meeting gets connected. We can talk on the phone as we work things out.

You are most welcome to join!

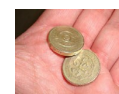
Br. Juniper, OEF



An Important Reminder

Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check to Nancy (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") at:

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans
c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer
3175 Duke Snider Ave.
Eugene, OR 97402**





Ecological Lord's Prayer

By Rev. Dr. [Claudio Carvalhaes'](#)



Our God who art in pluriverses, the skies
and the earth,

Blessed be your name: life. May your
pulsing life come to be seen, heard,

touched and felt through the oceans, the
forests, in the rocks, in the life of plants
and in the sounds of animals and singing
birds.

May the atmosphere of the sky that
carries our ability to breathe stay
balanced as fossils are kept under the
earth.

Give us this day our daily bread through a
variety of seeds and grains and leaves
without pesticides, without monocultures,
from local farms and agro-biodiverse-
cultures.

Forgive our plundering of the earth, our
total lack of relation and reciprocity with
the earth and more than human beings;



as cells, mycelium, fungi and infinite
processes of symbiosis forgive us daily by
giving life back when we destroy it.

And lead us not into consumerism and
devouring the earth but deliver us from the
apathy that says nothing can be changed.

For life is kinship, relationally and
reciprocity. Now and forever. Amen.

[https://www.facebook.com/
claudio.carvalhaes.9](https://www.facebook.com/claudio.carvalhaes.9)





Meditation on the Vow of Poverty

By Russell Rohloff, n/OEF



My testimony and my wife's testimony together has been that once we were young, and now we are old.... but we have never been forsaken by the Lord or have seen our seed begging bread. (Psalm 37:25). With that said, there are many spiritual disciplines and practices that lie at the foundation of The Order of Friars Minor, but if I had to pick one that was at the heart and soul of how Francis lived, it would be Holy Poverty. He was so consumed with laying hold of the fullness of Jesus that he did not want anything else taking up room in his life. Poverty was freedom from the world and its entanglements. To Francis, the world was his home, and he was not bound to one place by care or responsibility. He said a man who had nothing, had nothing to lose, that the fear of loss had no hold on him, making him therefore bold and genuine even in the nads of his enemies. It is from Francis' writings and example that we gain the description of following the "Poor Christ." Because of this, the original rule for the order composed by Francis found its expression in freedom from the world, with specific exhortations about ownership, permanent hermitages, using or possessing money, personal possessions, and the like.

It was while Francis was alive that the church's hierarchy began to field complaints that the stress on poverty was too severe and needed to be relaxed. Within ten years of Francis' death, the entire order changed significantly with a leadership no longer willing to subject themselves to Francis' Rule. This led even to the persecution of those brothers who remained true to Francis' vision of Holy Poverty resulting even in imprisonments, isolation, and exile.

While I agree that Francis' vision of poverty was so ascetic and strict that few could replicate it in practice, I must also acknowledge that it was of the utmost importance to Francis and cannot be overlooked without doing damage to the fountain of Franciscan spirituality. So, the question must still be answered, "What is my response to the vow of the spirit of poverty that I must take and how do I live out its calling and constraints in my own life as a Third Order Franciscan?" In no particular order I offer the following responses:

1. The Apostle John lists three principle sinful tendencies in I John 2:15-17, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is against these three tendencies that the evangelical counsels are set, with voluntary poverty being set against the lust of the eyes. This lust is nothing more than greed (wanting more, better, newer), the root of unbridled consumerism

and materialism; and covetousness (wanting what belongs to another simply for the sake of possessing it). Though it sounds trite, the old waste management adage still works. REDUCE my need for things, find other ways to live with less, consolidate life to reduce dependence on marketing, energy, and money, borrow or rent instead of buying. REUSE, avoid the throw-away mindset of America, maintain what I do possess, repurpose things for multiple uses. RECYCLE, reduce waste by recovering usable components, make use of something in a new application or manner, dispose of things in a responsible way.

2. Live simply, separate desire from need, live below my means, practice frugality but not miserliness, cultivate self-control and moderation.

3. Be content, embrace and give thanks for what God provides, know how to live (as the Apostle Paul says) in plenty or in want, pray daily to the Father for life's needs, avoid debt in order to possess something immediately.

4. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse of the Kingdom, give God the best and the first.

5. Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are His. Do not justify withholding from God by empty excuses, practice justice in all that I do, and mercy where more than justice must be offered. Swear even to my own hurt and uphold my word, be bound first of all by love in all things.

6. Count all things a gift from God and acknowledge Him as the source of all that fills my life; be faithful as a steward who must give account to his Lord.

7. Fight to the death in my struggle against the sins of envy, comparison, laziness. Do not trade my soul for a bowl of pottage or some trinket offered by the world. I cannot serve God and mammon.

8. Conduct my business and my life with integrity, faithfulness, and right intent. Exceed what justice demands, forgive debts and wrongs quickly and easily, hold no person in my debt, show no partiality.

These things are part of the foundation my wife and I have laid into our married life together. They inform our decisions, our lifestyle, our giving, our attitude toward the spirit of this age. As a Third Order Franciscan I am ready to embrace the calling of poverty as God defines it in my life. I admit that I cannot live as Francis did because of the responsibilities of family and such, but I will not deny the importance of his example and exhortation in this area of holy poverty. I will hold all earthly things loosely.

A CALL TO CARE FOR THE ALIENS IN OUR MIDST

In both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, as well as in the Koran, there is a high regard for hospitality and proper treatment of all people, with special concern for those without means, those who have lost a spouse, and those who are away from the place of their birth. In the Torah, we find the basis for this concern in the memory of the time of sojourn in Egypt when people were taken advantage of and put into slavery (Deuteronomy 10:19). The Torah insists on giving the necessary support and care for people from other lands (Leviticus 19:34). This theme is repeated in both the wisdom writings (Psalm 146:9) and in the writings of the prophets (Jeremiah 22:3, Malachi 3:5). The Greek Scriptures continue this in both the teachings of Jesus and the Apostles. The most important words of Jesus on this matter come from Matthew 25:31-46, as we do to the least we do to Jesus. The early church, following the letter of Hebrews (13:1-2), encouraged the welcoming of strangers.

The Apostle Paul took the radical step of reminding his readers that there is no such thing as a stranger, for there is no such thing as a difference among ethnic groups, among class status, or sex. We are all equal in Christ (Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:11).

What we have is an imperative to care for one another and to provide support and comfort to all. Even in Matthew 18 where Jesus explains how reconciliation ought to take place, and when it can't, how one is to treat the other person as an alien, which in other words means, still to be respected and treated as a neighbor, still in our responsibility of care.

So considering the history of our faith and our principles in the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, which call for radical inclusivity, we find the United States Government's current practices of terror against aliens to be reprehensible--particularly the denial of due process, the use of private for-profit-prisons for detainment, and the rendering of individuals to prisons outside of the United States. Thus we, the Servant Council of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans call for prayers for all people threatened or actually terrorized by the government of the United States because of identity and for appropriate resistance as discerned by each sibling in their circumstance. Finally, let us

pray that hearts will be changed even as the hearts of the Assyrians were changed by the preaching of Jonah.

The Servant Team,
Deb Snider, Juniper Robertson, Owusu Slater,
Petra Aleah, and Ronald Nuss-Warren

*Following are just a few verses in regard to how we are expected to relate to people who do not have citizenship in the country of their residence.

Jeremiah 22:3 ESV

Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

Deuteronomy 10:19 ESV

Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 19:34 ESV

You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.

Malachi 3:5 ESV

"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the Lord of hosts.

Exodus 23:9 ESV

"You shall not oppress a sojourner. You know the heart of a sojourner, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.

Ezekiel 22:29 ESV

The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.

(Continued on page 17)

A Call To Care... continued

3 John 1:5 ESV

Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are...

Ephesians 2:19 ESV

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

Hebrews 13:1-2 ESV

Let brotherly love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Galatians 3:28 ESV

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

for the future crimes they may commit, and that erodes the civil rights of every person within US borders and sets a precedent that we all need to fear.

We are also concerned about policy changes for those with TPS and Parolee status. Those individuals have entered the United States legally, and should be entitled to legal protection under the law, because information they have provided can now be used against them without warning and without notice. Additionally, we beg you to consider that using information from various government organizations such as the Internal Revenue Service, an organization, which previously promised that individual information would not be shared, is now being used to assist with arrest and deportation by ICE. If the United States is not a country of honor, and does not honor the word of government agencies to the people, there is no reason for us to be either trusted or held in high regard domestically or internationally.

A Letter on Immigration (for elected officials)

Dear (Name of elected official)

I am a (Postulant, Novice, associate or Professed member) of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, a Christ-centered international religious order, based primarily in the United States.

As an order, we seek social justice in the name and by the example of Jesus Christ, who was always widening the circle of those who are included, and whose mother and father were forced to flee a dangerous situation and go to a different, unfamiliar country, for his safety. Simply put, we as Christians place great importance on a Middle Eastern immigrant family.

Current policies in the United States, however, do not honor immigrants in any way. We are particularly concerned about issues of family separation, mass deportation, and deporting, and detaining individuals who have no criminal record, on the basis that if they're given sufficient opportunity and time, they will have a criminal record. This amounts to punishing individuals

The current administration ran on a platform of Christianity. We would submit that Jesus as we see in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, was persistent and constant about widening the circle of those who were included, usually those characterized as undesirable or even enemies by the powers that be. We ask that you search your conscience, and remember and honor the promises that have been made to immigrants in this country. Please protect these children of God.

Peace and all good,

(Your name here)



The Importance of a Structured Curriculum in Novitiate Formation

🌿 Petra Aleah Strand, OEF 🌿

(with the assistance of an open source AI)

A Case for Integrating the 30 Chapters

Introduction

As The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans evolves its Novitiate process—embracing regional cohorts, online modules, and monthly reflections with formation companions—the foundational role of a structured curriculum like the 30 Chapters remains vital. While innovative methods foster community and adaptability, the 30 Chapters ensure consistency, depth, and fidelity to our charism. This paper outlines how integrating them into new approaches strengthens formation while honoring our heritage.

1. Preserving Franciscan Identity and Charism

Rooted in Tradition: The 30 Chapters encapsulate four decades of spiritual wisdom, aligning Novices with The Order’s core values—poverty, humility, and service—as modeled by Saints Francis and Clare. Without this framework, key teachings risk fragmentation.

Comprehensive Formation: The curriculum systematically covers essentials (e.g., vows, prayer, community life), ensuring no aspect of Franciscan spirituality is overlooked. St. Bonaventure’s emphasis on “ordered steps” toward holiness mirrors this structured approach.

2. Fostering Unity and Shared Vision

Common Language: A unified curriculum allows novices globally to engage in discussions with shared references, deepening collective understanding. As St. Paul urged, “speak the same language” (1 Cor 1:10).

Community Integration: Shared learning through the 30 Chapters bonds novices, creating a foundation for lifelong fraternity. This prevents siloed formation as regional cohorts expand.

3. Enhancing Companionship and Dialogue

Guided Flexibility: The 30 Chapters provide formation companions with a roadmap, enabling personalized guidance while ensuring core topics are addressed. It enriches discussions by grounding them in shared themes.

Accountability: Clear benchmarks help formation companions assess readiness for profession, maintaining formation quality across diverse regions.

4. Addressing Concerns: Balance Without Compromise

Adaptability: The curriculum need not stifle creativity. Instead, it can frame discussions, allowing Novices to explore topics dynamically. For example, a chapter on “Franciscan Simplicity” could spark dialogue on modern materialism or ecological stewardship.

Holistic Formation: Blending structure with relational methods ensures novices grow intellectually, spiritually, and communally.

Conclusion

The 30 Chapters are not a relic but a living foundation. Integrating them into modules, cohorts, and monthly reflections honors our heritage while embracing innovation. As a pastor, I’ve seen structured curricula unify and deepen faith communities—principles equally vital for Franciscan formation. Let us weave this trusted resource into new methods, ensuring novices inherit a legacy as resilient as it is rooted.

“Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

— St. Francis of Assisi



The Importance of A Structured Curriculum... continued

Additional Thoughts

This proposal advocates for retaining the 30 chapters as the theological and formational backbone of our Novitiate, even as we innovate with appropriate modules and cohorts and monthly reflections with one's formation companion. It balances tradition with adaptability, ensuring unity without stifling creativity.

Some fear a curriculum limits creativity, but the 30 Chapters are not a cage—they are a trellis. They guide growth while leaving room for the Spirit to move uniquely in each Novice.

Just as Francis rebuilt the Church stone by stone, the 30 chapters rebuild our Novices' hearts, brick by brick, into a dwelling place for Gospel living.

The 30 chapters are not merely content—they are a covenant between generations of Franciscans. By integrating them into our evolving formation, we honor our founders' wisdom while empowering Novices to meet the world's needs. Let us offer them both roots and wings.

A Prayer That Just Gripped Me

Grant us, Lord God, a vision of your world
as your love would have it:
a world where the weak are protected,
and none go hungry or poor;
a world for the riches of creation are shared,
and everyone can enjoy them;
a world where different races and cultures
live in harmony and mutual respect;
a world where peace is built with justice,
and justice is guided by love.
Give us the inspiration and courage
to not only pray for it,
but to build it.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(This was given by Fr. James Marchionda, a Dominican,
in a retreat that a colleague attended in January.)

- Shared by Br. Mir

Renewing Franciscan Formation

A Proposal to Integrate the 30 Chapters with Modern Methods

Petra Strand, OEF

Introduction

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans stands at a crossroads: How do we preserve the wisdom of our 30 Chapters while embracing innovative tools like curated readings, video panels, and monthly seminars? Brother Juniper's proposal offers a path forward—one that honors tradition while meeting contemporary needs. This paper synthesizes both visions, proposing a renewed formation model that:

- 1. Retains the 30 Chapters as the theological backbone of novitiate formation.**
- 2. Enriches each chapter with multimedia resources (readings, videos, discussions).**
- 3. Expands themes to address modern realities (e.g., ecological living, interfaith relations).**

Proposed Framework: The 30 Chapters 2.0

1. Structure for Each Chapter

Component	Details	Example (Chapter: <i>Poverty</i>)
Short Reading	1–2 pages from Franciscan tradition (e.g., <i>Francis and the Sultan</i> for interfaith dialogue).	<i>The Rule of St. Francis, Chapter 6</i> on detachment.
Video Panel (20-30 minutes)	2–3 Professed members discuss how they live the theme.	Sr. Lucia (urban simplicity), Br. Mateo (rural frugality).

Renewing Franciscan Formation... continued

Monthly Seminar	Cohort discussion guided by reflection questions.	"How does poverty challenge my consumer habits?"
Personal Reflection	Journaling prompts for formation companions.	"Where do I cling to material security?"

2. Updates to Chapter Themes

Below is a **revised outline** merging existing chapters with Brother Juniper's proposed themes:

Original Chapter Themes	Modern Additions/ Expansions
3. A Penitential Order	Trans Life in OEF (inclusivity)
10. Poverty	Ecological Living (Laudato Si' integration)
12. Justice	Interfaith Relations & Social Justice
14. Families	Chastity & Relationships (modern contexts)
15. Universal Kinship	Interspecies Ethics/Animal Welfare
27. Diversity	LGBTQ+ Inclusion & Intersectionality
22. Simplicity and Time	Digital Detox & Mindfulness

Or Retain Core Themes: Poverty, prayer, justice, etc.

And Add New Topics:

- *Ecological Living* (Integrating *Laudato Si'*).
- *Interfaith Relations* (Dialogue with Francis' encounter with the Sultan).

- *Trans Life in OEF* (Inclusion as Franciscan hospitality).
- *Chastity* (Reimagining celibacy and relational covenants).

3. Collaborative Development Process

A. Task Force: Assemble educators (see Brother Juniper's list) to:

- Revise chapter outlines.
- Select readings (Franciscan classics + modern voices).
- Script video panels.

B. Pilot Phase: Test 3–5 updated chapters with a novice cohort.

C. Evaluation: Feedback from Formation Team and Council.

Why This Model Works**1. Depth Meets Accessibility**

Readings ground Novices in tradition; **videos** make it relatable.

Example: A chapter on "The Dry Period" could pair St. John of the Cross with a video of professed members sharing their spiritual droughts.

2. Community-Centered Learning

Seminars replace siloed study with communal discernment.

Videos introduce Novices to diverse professed members, fostering connection.

3. Flexibility for Modern Contexts

New themes (e.g., **ecological living**) address urgent charism calls.

Zoom panels allow global participation (e.g., a professed member in Kenya discussing *Universal Kinship*).

Renewing Franciscan Formation... continued

Implementation Timeline

Phase	Steps	Timeline
Task Force	Draft revised chapters, select readings, recruit video panelists.	3 months
Pilot	Test 5 chapters with feedback from 2 regional cohorts.	6 months
Revise	Adjust content based on Novice/companion input.	2 months
Launch	Roll out full curriculum with IT support (Zoom library, digital guides).	Ongoing

Addressing Concerns

"Is this too resource-intensive?"

Solution: Start small (e.g., 5 videos/year) and leverage volunteer educators.

"Will Novices still engage deeply?"

Solution: Pair videos with mandatory reflection questions for companions.

Conclusion

Let the 30 Chapters be the soil from which new growth emerges. Just as Francis saw God in lepers and sunsets, may our novices see the Gospel in both tradition and today's complexities.

This proposal bridges the 30 Chapters' wisdom with Brother Juniper's innovative spirit. By weaving together readings, videos, and seminars, we offer novices a formation that is both rooted and responsive — a true trellis for their growth

Next Steps:

1. **Approve the Task Force** (listed below).
2. **Allocate minimal funds** for video hosting/platform.
3. **Launch the pilot phase** by [date].

"All saints and sages, like rivers, speak the same language: For love is the only way." — Adapted from St. Francis

Appendix: Proposed Task Force Members

- Anne Nancy Vosler
- Nancy Menning
- Seaghan Murphy
- Markie Oliver
- Katie Cook
- Caritas Bailly
- Bruce James Kay
- Juniper Robertson
- [Others]





Fiddlesticks
c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
934 Round Oak Ct.
Nekoosa, WI 54457
U.S.A.

**Articles for the Post-Chapter Issue are being accepted immediately. The deadline is July 15, 2025*



A Prayer for The Romance of Life

Br. Stephan Scott Gerhardt, OEF



God Bless Us with the Ability to Understand and Make Way for the Romance of Life

The terrible thing we feared has happened but the romance of life continues even in the worst of circumstances.

Oh one of many names, forgive us for our uncharitable thoughts and show us how to love again in these days. Help us to love the person and set whatever differences we have aside.

Help us to remember that the clouds and the sunsets still want for our admiration just as the flowers still want for us to find and appreciate them.

Help us to see that somewhere a young couple is finding their way to holding hands and a long kiss that offers a new beginning.

Help us to create a space for the new mother among us who is emersed in the smell of innocence her child wrapped in a blanket close to the place of being fed.

The terrible thing we feared has happened but the romance of life continues even in the worst of circumstances.

Help us to remember that the romance of life is with us always, a gift intended to keep us going, and may God bless us with the ability to see when it is our time to provide care for another without worry or judgement for the circumstance

Amen

