

PRAYING WITH THE RITES AND RITUALS OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

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We know that through the years, the Ritual of the Secular Franciscans has been adapted and adjusted. Our current Ritual was approved and adopted in 1984.

Our constitution states, “provided that the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is maintained, the revision of liturgical books should allow for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions and peoples, especially in mission lands. In accord with this criterion, the Secular Franciscan fraternities scattered throughout the whole world, conscious that experience itself has a specific value, want to continue to bring to completion in all people and in any given culture the mystery of the Incarnate Word, the Savior of all people.”

Our rites and prayers presented in these celebrations with our Ritual are inspired by the traditions of the Secular Franciscan fraternity. Our national council is tasked to present to us a uniform ritual, especially relating to Admission and Profession.

And the OFS Rituals should manifest the gift of the Spirit proper to the Secular Franciscan Order and also its commitment to the gospel life. These rites accompany us along the way in our continued formation.

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Now, let's talk about these Rites & Rituals. First, the book: 'Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order' – Franciscan Media is obviously a necessity to have in our fraternities. I believe every member should have one, but at the minimum, every member of the council should have one. You can also find this on our national fraternity website and the website for our region: stclareregionofs.org

This book is divided into 3 sections:

1. Our Rites
2. Our Prayers at Fraternity Meetings
3. Lectionary

Our Rites & Ceremonies. Our fraternities should be using at least one of these on an annual basis at the minimum.

Welcoming / Admission / Profession / Annual Renewal / Anniversary of Profession

1. Our welcoming Ceremony is the first time a newcomer is 'introduced' to the community. The ceremony is short, but very effective. The formation director (or the professed member responsible for bringing the newcomer to the group) introduces that person. The minister 'warmly welcomes' that person and ends with a beautiful prayer. As a minister doing this, I was always mindful of keeping good eye contact to the newcomer and always smiling at that person.
2. Admission. This Rite should be simple and explained ahead of time to the candidate. ** (my memory – not knowing what it was!!). When I was the minister, during this Rite, I would make

sure that I paid special attention to the candidate(s) – eye contact, etc. I also would make sure that I said a small reflection specific to that candidate. This Rite would be performed in the presence of the entire community with communal prayer at the forefront it all. Of course, at the end, I would invite everyone there to applaud and welcome the candidate with a hug, etc.

The Rite of Admission is the first time the candidate experiences:

A warm and specific welcome and acceptance into the fraternity
The Tau Cros
And Our Rule

Regarding the meeting, This Rite would **replace** the prayer portion of the meeting. It fits perfectly.

It is a wonderful opportunity to bring the fraternity together in common prayer and acceptance of the candidate.

3. Profession. This Rite is, by far, my favorite! I cannot stress enough how important it is to adequately prepare the Candidate for this. – sharing the Ritual, explaining the Ritual, practicing the Ritual and involving the Candidate and his/her family in the Rite.

With the Rite of Profession being within a Mass, obviously that is the most perfect prayer we can do for that candidate and our community. Through the priest and the minister (who represent the fraternity), the Church accepts the commitment of the candidate.

This should not be taken lightly- very specific and intense preparation on all parts really is needed.

4. Annual Renewal of our Commitment. This rite is performed within some type of liturgical celebration – I like to see it done at the end of Mass for the Rite of Profession as the entire community is there already! And this can also be tied into an annual ceremony for those in your community who are celebrating big milestones in their professed state – ie: 10, 20, 30 years....

Section II of this book is: Prayers for the Fraternity Meeting.

We don't have to reinvent the wheel at every fraternity meeting! These are very straightforward and easy to follow. For example:

There are Opening and Closing Prayers for our meetings already typed out and ready to use. There are prayers for Council Meetings. I would use these from time to time when I was the minister of our fraternity. They are great! And if everyone on the council has this book already, then no copies are needed- just follow along and pray as a group!

And of course, there are prayers we use for the celebration of our Chapter of Elections! I just love these prayers as they truly and humbly invoke the HS into the election process.

One prayer that I have only heard once in my life are the prayers of establishing a new fraternity! I was blessed to have been able to witness and hear these prayers in the fall of 2020 at the establishment of the Joyful Servants fraternity in Jefferson City. I was all beautiful and truly brought tears to my eyes as I could see the pure joy each person there had.

One prayer that we will all be doing this year at one time, or another is the Prayer of a Pastoral or Fraternity visit. The REC will be visiting every fraternity this year! So, I am SO looking forward to sharing this prayer with all of you.

The last section is the Lectionary Appendix. If you are looking for a quick reading or reflection to use, I strongly suggest you look here first! I love this section because it contains all the gospels and readings you can choose from for the Rites – letters to the faithful from St. Francis – Admonitions –

And my favorite part- Prayers of St. Francis. Here they are:

The Canticle of Brother Sun
The Exhortation of the Praise of God
Office of the Passion
Praises to God
The Praises to be Said at All the Hours
The Prayer before the Crucifix

As a minister, as a formator, as a counselor, as a spiritual assistant, as a fraternity member- this book has everything in it that we need to follow, prepare, present, execute our rituals and pray with the Franciscan Heart.

This book should be present at every council and fraternity meeting as the most valuable resource to have.

Our commitment to the Gospel Life through our Profession begins and ends with prayer as St. Francis placed prayer as the most important thing in his life.

Our rituals and rites give us just that – the opportunity to continue to be the light of Jesus to others through our communal prayer with each other. Prayer binds us together; Prayer gives us hope and allows us to praise God with all our hearts!

In conclusion, I've never had the chance to lead a pastoral or fraternity visit before and as I was reading over this ritual, the last prayer really struck me, and so I would like to end with this –

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Thank you!