

FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

SPIRITUAL FORMATION



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FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Spiritual Formation

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INTRODUCTION

The Spiritual Formation program at FST is an integral part of the professional ministry degree programs (M.Div and MAMC). It involves an ongoing discernment process in response to God's call and plays a significant part in FST's overall approach of integrating head and heart.

Spiritual formation at FST is experiential, relational, and communal. Participation in the spiritual formation program builds upon the uniqueness of each person and provides community support as participants explore spiritual growth for ministry. In keeping with Franciscan theological tradition, spiritual formation emphasizes the unique revelation of God in each person, in every culture and in all creation.

Spiritual formation does not begin when students arrive at FST, nor does it end with graduation. We believe that a formation program for students must be "portable" -- that is, something that students can carry with them beyond FST. Thus, it provides students with skills, methods and resources for supporting their ongoing growth.

As FST prepares students for ministry in the church, we are aware of the increasing importance of lay ministerial formation. Lay students have been a significant presence at FST for over 25 years. Thus, the Spiritual Formation program is designed to facilitate a meaningful formation process for lay students; however, all students, including those in religious communities, are encouraged and welcome to participate.¹

From the beginning of their time at FST, students in professional ministry degree programs (M.Div and MAMC) are encouraged to create a personal plan for the spiritual formation that will meet their particular needs and goals. With the assistance of the Director of Spiritual Formation, they will also attend to the broader goals appropriate to the formation of lay ecclesial ministers. These goals are drawn from the Franciscan tradition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, and the National Association for Lay Ministry. An overview of the spiritual formation process is provided for students as they discern their needs for spiritual formation.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAM GOAL AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Goal Statement:

The Spiritual Formation Program at FST cultivates the development of a spiritual life fitting for ministry in a changing world. It promotes a communal environment that affirms the richness of cultural diversity and contributes to a world of peace, harmony and social/environmental justice. The program supports the integration of affective and intellectual growth and incorporates Franciscan spirituality as part of formation for ministry.

Student Learning Outcomes:

The following student learning outcomes incorporate FST's institutional goals and include elements of human and spiritual formation as identified in *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord* (p. 38-42). Outcomes 1-3 also relate to the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, Standard One².

1. Students will **discern and respond to their call** and **identify personal gifts and challenges for ministry** (1.1/1.2) through opportunities such as:
 - Spiritual direction
 - Reflection groups
 - Days of reflection
 - Identifying personal giftedness and challenges for ministry (e.g. MBTI, Enneagram, Living Your Strengths)
 - Rule of Life
2. Students will **nurture their relationship with God** through **personal and communal prayer** (1.3, 1.5) by participating in prayer forms such as:
 - Eucharist
 - Liturgy of the Hours (Communal morning prayer), Centering prayer, scripture prayer/Lectio Divina
 - Annual retreat
 - Prayer Series
3. Students will grow in **multicultural awareness** and commitment to **social/environmental justice** (1.3/1.6) through opportunities such as:
 - Multicultural celebrations
 - Retreat days (e.g. Street Spirit retreats)
 - Activities/events (e.g. Green Seminary activities, Earth Day/Nature experiences; Peace & Our Planet/Carbon Fast Lenten Series)
 - Dorothy Day Catholic Worker breakfast

4. Students will integrate **Franciscan spirituality/heritage** into their spiritual formation by participation in events such as:
 - Franciscan Vision Series
 - Transitus
5. Students will demonstrate the **skills of self-assessment for ministry** through engaging in:
 - self-reflective processes (e.g. journaling, self-assessment reflection questions)
 - ongoing creation and review of their personal spiritual formation plan
 - participation in small group reflection and theological reflection on ministry (Ministry Seminar)
 - critical reflection of their affective, intellectual and spiritual growth as part of their theology of ministry (Field Education/Ministry Seminar)

RULE OF LIFE

The Rule of Life was introduced at FST as a way of paying particular attention to the spiritual formation of lay students. Over the years it has proven to be meaningful not only in the lives of lay students but to individual faculty, staff, and students from a variety of religious communities as well. The Rule of Life as central to the spiritual formation program responds to the reality that formation must be somewhat individualized because students represent different stages of growth and different ethnic cultures.³ The Rule of Life process enables each student to develop for her or himself an appropriate Rule of Life that will serve as the foundation for professional ministry and a key to continued spiritual growth.

What is a Rule of Life?

A Rule of Life is an intentional pathway for life's journey into deeper relationship with God. The purpose of a Rule of Life is to support our growth into holiness/wholeness. Its intention is to "help us establish a rhythm of daily living within which new freedoms can grow."⁴ Most basically, a Rule of Life is a form of personal covenant with the Living God.

Committing to rules of life is an ancient Christian tradition. Desert Mothers and Fathers used them. Through engaging in the Rule of Life process, we recover the power and meaning of that ancient practice.

Writing a Rule of Life is compatible with the Franciscan heritage. In his *Testament*, Francis of Assisi wrote, "And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me."⁵ Francis listened to God speaking to his heart and learned the pattern for his Rule of Life.

As it was with Francis, so it is for each of us, discovering a Rule of Life that flows from a reflective process. In that process, one looks for a set of "attitudes, behaviors, or elements that are routine, repeated, regular"⁶ in one's life. A "Rule of Life," based on such a pattern, provides an underlying beat, sets a life rhythm for growth.

As such, a Rule of Life is a form of personal covenant which assures a person of God's faithfulness in her/his life. Entering into a covenant relationship affirms a person in their response-ability for their own spiritual formation and growth; creating a Rule of Life allows them to take ownership of their spiritual formation process.

Participants in the Spiritual Formation program are asked to discover their particular pattern that will provide structure and support for their spiritual growth. Then, in the style of Francis, they are invited to "write it down simply and in a few words," as their Rule of Life, their means to grow continually in love of God and all God's creation.

Rules are to be lived, reflected on and renewed throughout one's life. The practice of designing individual rules of life enables students to see their experience in the Spiritual Formation program as only one phase of a lifelong process.

Covenant Ritual

Rules of Life express individual student's relationships with God, yet spiritual growth does not happen in isolation. To express their commitment within the community of faith, students are given the opportunity to present their Rules to God in the context of a Covenant Ritual.

The Covenant Ritual occurs in the context of an FST community Eucharist or morning prayer. Students place their Rules of Life on the altar. They ask for the prayers and support of the community and the community pledges their prayers and support. As the sign of belonging to God and as a seal of the covenants, students receive a Tau cross.

The Tau cross is chosen as the sign and seal of the covenants because it is an important Franciscan symbol and sign of belonging to God. St. Francis used the Tau for his signature and as the key symbol of what all Franciscans are called to be. It is one of the smallest letters of the Greek alphabet and the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. For Francis, the Tau resembled the cross of Christ and reminded him of the smallest and poorest of the world.

Rule of Life/Covenant Details

- Rules of Life are works in progress, open to continued reflection, review, and revision.
- Rules of Life will be developed and reviewed in dialogue with the Director of Spiritual Formation.
- The Rule of Life process includes:
 - Attendance at an introductory meeting to learn about the Rule of Life
 - Participation in a (half-day) Rule of Life retreat
 - Discerning readiness for and design of one's Rule of Life with Director of Spiritual Formation
 - Ritualizing one's Rule of Life in a communal Covenant Ceremony (held each semester at FST community liturgy or morning prayer)
 - Periodic ongoing reflection with Director of Spiritual Formation and/or others (e.g. spiritual director) on one's Rule of Life

ASSESSMENT

Background

*“If there is any one image that could represent the heart of assessment it is ‘to sit down beside.’ Coming as it does from the Latin *assidere*, this image of sitting beside rather than standing in front of, or towering above, or at a distance from, creates a new dynamic of assessor and learner...It is the sense of “sitting down beside” that leads to a mutual design of tasks rather than an external test to take.”⁷*

Six Basic Norms of Assessment⁸

1. Assessment is natural. Each of us in ministry is engaged in assessment when we take part in discernment and theological reflection.
2. Assessment is educational, not just evaluative. The assessment process is not just to identify what the candidate does not know, but to build on what one does know to plan the next part of learning.
3. Assessment is collaborative. It is the ministry student, with the collaboration of the assessor, who designs the learning experience.
4. Assessment is progressive. Competency-based education and its accompanying assessment counts on “once demonstrated, quickly built on.”
5. Assessment is ever more self-directed. The primary mover in the collaboration changes. As the ministry student progresses and learns the tools of self-assessment, and as experiences he or she can build upon, then the ministry student takes more and more control of the design process.
6. Assessment is often at its heart a spiritual path, a discernment of one’s vocation, both by oneself and by the community.

Assessment Processes

Self-Assessment: Means of assessment in the area of spiritual formation include student self-assessment and meetings with Director of Spiritual Formation to identify hopes and goals and to review areas of growth. Meetings can take place anytime throughout a student’s degree program and are ordinarily held on a semester basis. Reflection/self-assessment guide sheets are provided for each phase of the process. Four of these are included in the student’s assessment file: “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: I”(1st semester); Mid-Point Reflection of Self-Assessment (2nd semester); “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: II (3rd semester)”; and “Concluding Review/Self-Assessment (4th semester)”.

Program Assessment: Program assessment includes:

- Yearly review process with students, e.g. evaluation(s) of Spiritual Formation Program (Director of Spiritual Formation collects data)
- Ministry Seminar faculty, including Academic Dean, Director of Field Education, and Direc-

tor of Spiritual Formation confer each year about program effectiveness and ways to improve it.

- Director of Spiritual Formation incorporates changes to Spiritual Formation program.

SPIRITUAL FORMATION STEP BY STEP: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS

Spiritual formation is an important and integral part of your ministerial degree program (M.Div/MAMC) at the Franciscan School of Theology. From the beginning, you are encouraged and expected to participate in creating a personal plan for your spiritual formation that will meet your own needs and goals. In addition to your own hopes and intentions regarding spiritual formation, FST has identified broader goals and learning outcomes appropriate to the formation of lay ecclesial ministers. These are drawn from the Franciscan tradition, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (*National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers, 2006*) and the National Association for Lay Ministry (*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, 2005*). During the course of your degree program, it is important to familiarize yourself with these documents which identify areas to be included in your overall ministerial formation.

As you have questions along the way, the Director of Spiritual Formation will be available to assist you in every step of your spiritual formation program at FST.

What are the steps in creating a personal plan for your spiritual formation?

- 1. At the beginning of your first semester, an initial interview with the Director of Spiritual Formation. You will be invited to reflect on various areas of your spiritual life and to begin creating your spiritual formation plan.** (See “Initial Interview Reflection/Self-Assessment” and “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: I”)*
- 2. 2nd semester** (and every semester thereafter whether you are a full-time or part-time student): **Review and reflect on your spiritual formation process: your goals, areas of growth, areas calling for more attention. Meet with Director of Spiritual Formation for review of these areas with the intention of providing means of support, clarification, discernment and assessment.** (See “Mid-Point Reflection and Self-Assessment”)*
- 3. 3rd semester: Continued reflection on your own personal goals and the goals of FST’s spiritual formation program. Incorporate additions/revisions to your personal plan as needed.** You will notice that personal plans change and grow. Each semester you may be drawn to focus on a different area/goal. Some will come more naturally; others will “stretch” you. Both are good! By the conclusion of your degree, a successful process of formation will have included attention to your personal goals and to the broader goals and learning outcomes identified by FST. (See “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: II”)*
- 4. 4th semester: Continued self-assessment, including areas for growth and attention in your ongoing (lifelong!) spiritual journey. Review and reflect on your spiritual formation process with the Director of Spiritual Formation.** (See “MAMC Concluding Review/Self-Assessment”)*

Throughout your semesters in the MAMC program, specific consideration in developing your spiritual formation plan is given to the following:

- Participation in FST community life and spiritual formation offerings

- Spiritual direction
- Rule of Life
- FST's annual retreat weekend and/or other retreat opportunities
- Franciscan Vision Lecture Series
- Awareness of personal gifts and challenges for ministry/commitment to ongoing discernment of call
- Habits of personal prayer and communal worship
- Commitment to action on behalf of social/environmental justice
- Relationship of spiritual growth/practice to current realities in church and world
- Relationships with others of diverse cultures, backgrounds, etc.
- Understanding and experience of Franciscan spirituality
- Processes of self-reflection and assessment

*A copy of the following will be kept in your assessment file:

- Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: I (1st semester)
- Midpoint Reflection and Self-Assessment (2nd semester)
- Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: II (3rd semester)
- MAMC Concluding Review/Self-Assessment (4th semester)

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INITIAL INTERVIEW REFLECTION/SELF-ASSESSMENT

Reflection: The following questions are meant to facilitate your own self-assessment as you begin your program of spiritual formation at FST. Your reflection and responses to these questions will assist you in clarifying the formation goals for your first year in the program. Following your personal reflection, the Director of Spiritual Formation will meet with you to review your responses and further your reflection. Upon completion of your meeting with the Director of Spiritual Formation, please refer to “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan” (see next page) and begin to create your plan for spiritual formation. This will constitute your “formation plan” for your first year. Upon review of it with the Director of Spiritual Formation, it will become part of your assessment portfolio.

- What has been most helpful for me in developing a **spiritual path**? What nourishes my spirit?
- How would I describe my **prayer experiences** and practices. How am I invited into prayer? What form(s) does my prayer take? Are there other spiritual practices that have been/are significant for me?
- What experience have I had with **retreats**?
- What is my experience and participation in **liturgy**? What is the place of communal worship in my life?
- Have I experienced any forms of **communal reflection**, such as faith sharing or group theological reflection, group spiritual direction, etc.
- Have I had experience with a spiritual mentor, such as **spiritual direction**?
- Has **social/environmental justice** been part of my spirituality? Have I had experience in **multicultural settings**? In what ways?
- How familiar am I with **Franciscan spirituality**?
- How do I feel God is inviting me to **grow** in the area of spiritual formation, and what is my **response** to this invitation?

Name: _____ Date: _____

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CREATING MY SPIRITUAL FORMATION PLAN: I

First Semester of Program

Background Reading:

- [*Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*](#), “Spiritual Formation” pp. 38-42
- *USCCB National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)” (printed version, pp. 27-28)
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Objectives (See pages 2 and 3)

As a result of my self-reflection and assessment (see “Initial Interview Reflection/Self-Assessment”), what are my personal needs and goals for my spiritual growth and formation at FST at this time? Given these personal needs/goals and the overall goals of the FST Spiritual Formation program, what specific goals do I set for myself during my first year in this program?

Goals:
How will I implement these goals? What resources will I seek for support in moving toward my goals? (For suggested ways to implement, see p. 2, “Student Learning Outcomes,” and semester calendar of Spiritual Formation offerings)

Name:	Program:	Date submitted: / /
Reviewed with Director of Spiritual Formation:		Date: / /

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CREATING MY SPIRITUAL FORMATION PLAN: II

Reading Review:

- [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#), “Spiritual Formation” pp. 38-42
- *USCCB National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)” (printed version, pp. 27-28)
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (See pages 2 and 3)

As a result of my ongoing reflection and self-assessment (see “Mid-point Reflection and Self-Assessment”), what goals do I set for myself as I enter the second half of my degree program?

I. At this time I identify the following hopes/goals for my spiritual formation for ministry:
II. How will I implement these goals? What resources will I seek for support in moving to ward my goals? (For suggested ways to implement, see p. 2, “Student Learning Outcomes” and semester calendar of Spiritual Formation offerings)

Name:	Program:	Date submitted: / / (Due Sept. 30 of 3 rd semester in program)
Reviewed with Director of Spiritual Formation:		Date: / /

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MAMC CONCLUDING REVIEW/ASSESSMENT

Reading Review:

- [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#), “Spiritual Formation” pp. 38-42
- *USCCB National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)” (printed version, pp. 27-28)
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (See pages 2 and 3)

“Ongoing formation, which strengthens ministerial identify as well as enhancing ministerial skills, is not a luxury to be pursued when time and resources allow, but is rather a permanent necessity for every ecclesial minister, lay or ordained.” (Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, p. 51)

Reflection: Reflect on each of the following in relation to your growth in this area during your time at FST. Please identify one or two ways you have addressed each of these areas.

Discerning and responding to the call of the Spirit; identifying personal gifts and challenges for ministry. Ways I have attended to this...
Nurturing my relationship with God through personal and communal prayer. Ways I have attended to this...
Growing in community, multicultural awareness and commitment to social/environmental justice. Ways I have attended to this...
Deepening understanding and experience of Franciscan spirituality. Ways I have attended to this...

Integrating affective and intellectual growth. Ways I have attended to this...
Demonstrating the skills of self-assessment. Ways I have attended to this...
What have been the areas of greatest spiritual growth for me during my professional ministry degree program?
How has my spiritual formation influenced my self-understanding as a minister in a multi-cultural church?
As my spiritual journey continues, what areas of growth call for further/ongoing attention? What resources can/will I draw on to attend to my ongoing spiritual formation?

Name:	Program:
Date submitted: / / (due April 15 of final semester of MAMC program)	
Director of Spiritual Formation:	Date: / /

RESOURCES

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Mullen, Rose, ed, *Competency-Based Ministry Assessment Tool: A Resource for Ministry Formation Directors* (National Association for Lay Ministry: Chicago, 2000), Introduction.

National Association for Lay Ministry, *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*. Washington, D.C.: 2006.

_____. *That Ministries May Flourish: Formational Resources for Using the National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*. Washington, D.C.: 2007.

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United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord: A Resource for Guiding the Development of Lay Ecclesial Ministry*. Washington, D.C.: 2005.

ENDNOTES

¹ “Franciscan and other seminarians work with their respective formation directors regarding their plan for spiritual formation. FST’s Director of Field Education serves as liaison with the Formation Committee of the Santa Barbara Province of Franciscans. For purposes of MAMC/M.Div degrees, seminarian students provide documentation of fulfillment of their community’s spiritual formation program, which serves as equivalency regarding spiritual formation at FST. This documentation is kept in the student’s assessment file.

² Numbers in parentheses relate to USCCB National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers’ Spiritual Formation, 2006.

³ Ramona Miller OSF, *Presentation on Lilly Panel for Spiritual Formation*, January 2005.

⁴ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 138.

⁵ Regis J. Armstrong, J. A. Wayne Hellmann, William J. Short, eds. *The Saint: Francis of Assisi Early Documents, Vol. 1* (New York: New City Press, 1999), 125.

⁶ Thompson, *Ibid.*

⁷ Rose Mullen. ed, *Competency-Based Ministry Assessment Tool: A Resource for Ministry Formation Directors* (National Association for Lay Ministry: Chicago, 2000), Introduction

⁸ *Ibid.*