



Franciscan School of Theology

IN AFFILIATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO

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## Spiritual Formation

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## INTRODUCTION

Rooted in Franciscan tradition, the core focus of the FST's Spiritual Formation program is the integration of students' spiritual growth along with their academic and intellectual development. At FST, spiritual formation is experiential, relational and communal. Participation in the spiritual formation program builds upon the uniqueness of each person and explores patterns and rhythms of spiritual practice that support a person in ministry and in life. In keeping with Franciscan theological tradition, spiritual formation emphasizes the unique revelation of God in each person, in every culture and in all creation.

A unique dimension of the Spiritual Formation program provides students the opportunity to develop a Rule of Life, which is a form of personal covenant. In consultation with the Associate Dean of Students, participants prepare and commit themselves to their Rule of Life in the presence of the school community gathered in prayer at a Covenant Ritual. Those witnessing the commitment are invited to offer support and prayer for those making their covenant.

In addition to the Rule of Life, the Spiritual Formation program provides experiences of communal prayer, retreats, spiritual direction referrals, and opportunities for small group reflection and spiritual renewal. Attention to personal growth coupled with awareness of social/environmental justice supports an integrated approach to spiritual formation at FST.

During their time at FST, students are encouraged to create a personalized spiritual formation plan. For students in the professional ministry degree program (MDiv) creating a spiritual formation plan is an integral part of their program. With the assistance of the Director or Spiritual Formation, they are encouraged to develop a plan that attends to their particular needs and goals as well as to goals specific 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.<sup>1</sup>

Since formation is a lifelong process, the Spiritual Formation program is extended to alumni of the school through invitations to participate in liturgical and other activities and celebrations, so that a spirit of generous service can be supported and sustained beyond students' time at FST.

## 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 *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers* (revised November 2011), Standard Two: Spiritual<sup>2</sup>.

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 referrals
  - Reflection groups
  - Days of reflection
  - Identifying personal giftedness and challenges for ministry (e.g. Myers-Briggs indicator/assessment)
  - 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 or private prayer), Scripture reading, Franciscan devotions
  - 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
  - Activities/education through entities such as Franciscan Action Network and Catholic Climate Covenant
4. Students will integrate **Franciscan spirituality/heritage** into their spiritual formation by participation in events such as:
  - Franciscan Vision Series
  - Transitus
  - Opportunities for prayer and small group reflection around Franciscan spiritual themes



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

## 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 cultures.<sup>3</sup>

### What is a Rule of Life?

Most basically, a Rule of Life is a form of personal covenant with the Living God. “It is an integration of Franciscan thought and practice at a granular level. It rests on certain Christian assumptions about the place of experience and affections within serious academic life and work. It also takes into account those inevitable intersections of student life and study (i.e. caring for children or parents, illness, finance, or tensions within one’s home community). It is a personal expression of faith and a personal commitment to a particular set of spiritual practices, and it is a place for spiritual aspirations and humble self-assessment.”<sup>4</sup> Though this occurs before the school gathered in prayer, it is not in itself a commitment to any form of community life.

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.

### What makes it Franciscan?

There are distinct elements of the program that might identify it as “Franciscan”: readings, images and symbols, for example. More significantly, in the lives of Saints Francis and Clare, we find many examples of trust in a variety of persons and spiritual expressions:

In calling community gatherings, Clare advises the abbess to “consult with all her sisters concerning whatever concerns the welfare and good of the monastery, for the Lord frequently reveals what is better to the youngest.”<sup>5</sup> Perhaps responding to his companion’s anxiousness, Francis assures Brother Leo, “In whatever way seems better to you to please the Lord God and to follow His footprints and poverty, you may do it with the blessing of God and my obedience.”<sup>6</sup>

Participants in the Rule of Life process are invited to consider that, from the very beginning of the Franciscan movement, its regular practice included a certain inner mobility, an attention to changing circumstances and adjustments over time. As students develop and rewrite rules of life long after they leave FST, they understand that these adjustments are not concessions, but acts of faith instigated by prayer, the presence of others, and encounters with creation.

### **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 liturgy. Students place their Rules of Life before the gathered community. They ask for the prayers and support of the school and the school 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 some consider it as a key symbol of what all Franciscans are called to be.

### **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 Associate Dean of Students.
- 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 Associate Dean of Students
  - Ritualizing one's Rule of Life in a communal Covenant Ceremony (held each academic year at an FST liturgy)
  - Periodic ongoing reflection with Associate Dean of Students and/or others (e.g. spiritual director) on one's Rule of Life

## INTEGRATION AND ASSESSMENT

### The Integrated Self in Theological Education

*Integration is the ongoing process of learning in relation to knowing, being and doing: each of these aspects of the self is engaged and brought into relationship with each other. Integration is also a goal: it is initiated and formed in and through education but its telos is to be a wise and able practitioner. The goal of integration for the self relates to ongoing vocational discernment and professional training in which knowledge, practice, and moral commitment become primary ways in which the self is formed.<sup>7</sup>*

Spiritual formation plays a significant role in this ongoing process of integration (which is in itself a response to a call from God). Documenting evidence of progress towards the goal of becoming “a wise and able practitioner” entails careful self-reflective work on the part of the student, and continued assessment of the spiritual formation program itself.

### Assessment Processes

**Student Assessment:** Means of assessment in the area of spiritual formation include student self-assessment and meetings with Associate Dean of Students 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” (1<sup>st</sup> semester); Mid-Point Reflection of Self-Assessment (2<sup>nd</sup> semester); “Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: II (3<sup>rd</sup> semester)”; and “Concluding Review/Self-Assessment (4<sup>th</sup> semester)”.

**Program Assessment:** Program assessment includes:

- Yearly review process with students, e.g. evaluation(s) of Spiritual Formation Program (Associate Dean of Students collects data)
- Ministry Seminar faculty, including Academic Dean, Director of Field Education, and Associate Dean of Students confer each year about program effectiveness and ways to improve it.
- Associate Dean of Students 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 (MDiv) 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, 2011*) 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 Associate Dean of Students 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 in Ministry Seminar, an initial interview with the Associate Dean of Students. 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. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 Associate Dean of Students 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. 3<sup>rd</sup> 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. 4<sup>th</sup> 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 Associate Dean of Students.** (See “Concluding Review/Self-Assessment”)\*

Throughout your semesters in the 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, if desired
- 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 of Ministry Seminar)
- Midpoint Reflection and Self-Assessment (2nd semester)
- Creating My Spiritual Formation Plan: II (3rd semester)
- Concluding Review/Self-Assessment (4th semester)



## FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### 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 will assist you in clarifying the formation goals for your first year in the Ministry Seminar. Once you have responded to these questions, the Associate Dean of Students will meet with you to share your responses and further your reflection. Upon completion of your meeting with the Associate Dean of Students, you will begin to create your spiritual formation plan for the academic year for those in the MDiv program. Upon review of it with the Associate Dean of Students, 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
 SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

**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, [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#)
- National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (revised November 2011), “Standard Two: Spiritual,” pp. 5-6, [Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)”
- 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?

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

Name:	Program:	Date submitted:    /    /
Reviewed with Associate Dean of Students:		Date:    /    /

## FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### MID-POINT REFLECTION AND SELF-ASSESSMENT

**Reading Review:**

- Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, “Spiritual Formation,” pp. 38-42, [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#)
- National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (revised November 2011), “Standard Two: Spiritual,” pp. 5-6, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)”
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Objectives (See pages 2 and 3)

**Reflection/Self-Assessment:**

<b>What has been the greatest area of spiritual growth for me since I entered the ministerial degree program at FST? In what other areas have I grown?</b>	
<b>What areas of my personal goals and FST’s goals and learning outcomes for spiritual formation (p. 2) have I grown in? What still needs attention?</b>	
<i>Areas I’ve grown in:</i>	
<i>Still needs attention:</i>	
<b>What are some of my gifts and some of my limitations? How do they affect my faith journey? The way I look at ministry?</b>	
<i>Gifts:</i>	
<i>Limitations:</i>	
<b>What has been most helpful to me in my spiritual formation thus far?</b>	
Reviewed with Associate Dean of Students:     /     /	Program:
Student:	Associate Dean of Students:

## FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### CREATING MY SPIRITUAL FORMATION PLAN: II

**Reading Review:**

- Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, “Spiritual Formation,” pp. 38-42, [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#)
- National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (revised November 2011), “Standard Two: Spiritual,” pp. 5-6, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)”
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Objectives (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?

<b>I. At this time I identify the following hopes/goals for my spiritual formation for ministry:</b>
<b>II. How will I implement these goals? What resources will I seek for support in moving toward my goals?</b> (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 <sup>rd</sup> semester in program)
Reviewed with Associate Dean of Students:		Date:    /    /

## FRANCISCAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

### CONCLUDING REVIEW/ASSESSMENT

**Reading Review:**

- Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord, “Spiritual Formation,” pp. 38-42, [Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord](#)
- National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers (revised November 2011), “Standard Two: Spiritual,” pp. 5-6, “[Standard One: Personal and Spiritual Maturity](#)”
- FST Spiritual Formation Goals and Student Learning Objectives (See pages 2 and 3)

*“Ongoing formation, which strengthens ministerial identity 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.

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

<b>Integrating affective and intellectual growth.</b> Ways I have attended to this...
<b>Demonstrating the skills of self-assessment.</b> Ways I have attended to this...
<b>What have been the areas of greatest spiritual growth for me during my professional ministry degree program?</b>
<b>How has my spiritual formation influenced my self-understanding as a minister in a multi-cultural church?</b>
<b>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?</b>

Name:	Program:
Date submitted:    /    /    (due April 15 of final semester of the program)	
Associate Dean of Students:	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.

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Thompson, Marjorie A., *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995.

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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

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- <sup>1</sup> See “The Franciscan Intellectual Tradition,” <http://franciscantradition.org/>; National Association for Lay Ministry, *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*, (Washington, D.C.: 2011); 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).
- <sup>2</sup> Numbers in parentheses relate to *National Certification Standards for Lay Ecclesial Ministers*.
- <sup>3</sup> Ramona Miller OSF, *Presentation on Lilly Panel for Spiritual Formation*, January 2005.
- <sup>4</sup> Donna Foley OFS, Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities presentation, June 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> Clare of Assisi, “The Form of Life of Saint Clare,” *The Lady: Clare of Assisi: Early Documents*, ed. and trans. by Regis Armstrong (New York: New City Press, 2006), 115.
- <sup>6</sup> Francis of Assisi, “A Letter to Brother Leo,” *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents*, Vol. 1 *The Saint*, ed. Regis Armstrong, Wayne Hellman, and William Short (New York: New City Press, 1999), 122.
- <sup>7</sup> Kathleen A. Cahalan, “Integration in Theological Education” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Practical Theology*, ed. Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (John Wiley & Sons, 2014), 389.