

GATHERED INSPIRED SENT



CALLED TO SERVE

ORDER OF FRIAR SERVANTS OF MARY
Vocation Newsletter

The discernment of a vocation to serve the Lord as a consecrated person (vowed religious) or a priest is the process of clarifying both the call and one's response to the call. Discernment is more than sensing a feeling of being called. Discernment is the process of coming to know oneself in light of God's love and identifying how best to use one's talents and gifts in the service of the Lord. While the discernment process can be involved and time consuming, it leads to a deeper understanding of oneself and a greater openness to the grace of God operative in our lives. But discernment does not stop once a choice is made to enter a religious community. One's discernment continues throughout a period of time named "Initial Formation." Initial formation begins once a man is accepted into a religious community and continues through profession of solemn or final vows. The purpose of initial formation is to continue the candidate's discernment through life in community, engaging in a program of study under the direction of a formation Master. The formation Master is a friar trained in directing a formation program.

In the venerable tradition of the Servite Order, initial formation is understood as *"a time of grace to help a candidate arrive at the truth about himself; in the Christian experience this truth is intelligible in Christ Jesus, true man. The great tradition calls this process "Christiformitas" (Conformity with*

Christ)." Formation for the Servite Order is growing in the knowledge of God's grace that enlightens one's sense of self to acknowledge areas of personal growth and the necessity to grow closer to God. Formation is about engaging in the process of on-going conversion in preparation

is that one becomes a member of a religious community solely by taking special classes, fulfilling certain requirements or learning certain regimens, habits or ideas. Formation is more than attending classes or praying certain prayers. Initial formation is about being formed to witness Christ



to witness the Lord in the vowed life. Formation is a journey; a process to discovering one's best self in light of the Lord's grace. A misnomer about formation

to the world. Initial formation is being introduced to the community while both the candidate and the community continue to discern the candidate's call to the life of the community. The Servite formation



process is aided by four equally important elements: the formation community, the Master of Formation, the *horarium*, and personal reflection, prayer and study.

restrictive, but a means to guide the life of the formation community. The schedule affords ample time for personal reflection, prayer and study.

When a candidate's application is accepted, he begins initial formation living in a formation house. This can be a place where formation is to sole ministry of

Religious life is the life of discipleship that deepens one's love with Jesus. No person can be a consecrated person if they are not in love with Jesus. The Lord is the

Reflection Questions:

1. As I understand the formation process, how could this process help me grow in my discipleship of the Lord?
2. What questions about the formation process do I have for the Vocation Directors?

the local community or the formation house can be part of a larger, multi-ministry community. In either situation, formation happens in a designated place. The local community of solemn professed friars is the witness of Servite life to the candidate(s). In living the religious life well, the formation community becomes the living embodiment of both the Servite Charism and Tradition. The friars assist the Master of Formation in giving classes to those in formation while assisting in the assessment of the candidates throughout the formation process. The Master of Formation oversees the entire formation process.

reason for our vocation, the inspiration of our life and the object of our love. Daily time for reflection, especially on the sacred scriptures, prayer and study is not an option for the consecrated person who is serious about their relationship with the Lord. These three actions place the religious squarely in contact with the Lord and deepen our relationship with Jesus. In formation, students are taught methods of prayer and meditation, and have time for study so that their love of Jesus can grow and their vocation to follow Jesus in the evangelical counsels (vows) can be deepened and clarified. At first glance, the community's horarium can seem a bit full and busy. When one begins living the schedule, one sees the freedom to pursue the goal of being in formation: to love the Lord deeply and witness to Him in poverty, chastity and obedience.

The Master of Formation, elected by the Provincial Council, is a friar who is known to be a good example of Servite life, possesses a good knowledge of Servite history and charism, and is trained in overseeing the formation process. In the formation process, the Master's role is to oversee the process and guide the candidate's growth and movement through the stages of the process.

Initial formation in a religious community is a continuation of the discernment of one's vocation to consecrated life within a community setting. Likewise, the formation process is a means to instruct the student in what it means to be a religious, how to be a religious, and to assist him in falling ever deeper in love with the Lord. As you continue your discernment, know that we Servites are praying for you.

The formation process is structured by the *horarium* or schedule by which the community lives the Servite life. The *horarium* has daily, weekly and monthly components to it. Aspects of the local Servite community's life is contained in the schedule: daily prayer and mealtimes, the date of the monthly conventual chapter (community meeting), formation classes and domestic and ministerial activities of the friars and students. The *horarium* is not

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