

Regional Fraternity of Eastern Canada
SUGGESTED STUDY PROGRAM
FOR FRATERNITY COUNCILS

*FOR A FRATERNITY COUNCIL TO UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT
THE 15 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FRATERNITY COUNCIL*

EXPLANATION OF OUTLINE

The fifteen points of the **Responsibilities of the Fraternity Council**, each one subdivided into (a) and (b) can be summarized as follows:

Part 1 describes the Council's responsibilities toward Fraternal Life:

1. to enable the members to experience brotherhood/sisterhood;
2. to animate and guide the fraternity;
3. to discern the fraternity's needs;
4. to develop the sense of being Church, apostles and Franciscans.

Part 2 concerns the Council's promotion of healthy membership:

5. to discern genuine vocations to the SFO;
6. to look after the formation program;
7. to sustain permanent commitment;
8. to help members in difficulty;
9. to arrange for withdrawal or dismissal.

Part 3 explains the council's role in strengthening the Fraternity:

10. to hold regular council and fraternity meetings;
11. to meet with other Franciscans;
12. to provide for continuing education;
13. to raise support for the SFO's needs;
14. to look for spiritual assistance;
15. to assure fidelity to the Rule and Franciscan charism.

USE OF MATERIAL

It is suggested that the Council takes one point for each council meeting over a period of fifteen months. All the councillors are asked to prepare, in writing, an example and a plan of action for putting the particular point into practice in the local fraternity. This is to be done during the month before the council meeting. These examples and plans should all

be kept by the Secretary in a “Responsibilities” file, for future reference when the fraternity compiles its “Manual of Responsibility”. One councillor is to be designated each month to present his/her example and plan at the next council meeting.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FRATERNITY COUNCIL

(as found in the Secular Franciscan Pauline Rule of 1978)

Part 1: Fulfilling the Characteristics of Fraternal Life

1. *to build up the spirit and reality of fraternity on different levels (art. 20)*
 - a) modeling and actualizing a basic evangelical community of laity
 - b) making happen a “lived experience of togetherness”, not just a club or sodality
2. *to animate and guide fraternity life (art. 21a)*
 - a) animate (giving life, inspiration, motivation) as principle of unity
 - b) guide (giving direction, definition, organization, service) as principle of movement
3. *to discern the needs of the fraternity and help the community expresses itself according to those needs (art. 21b)*
 - a) discovering the “personality” of the fraternity
 - b) shaping the characteristics of this personality according to those needs
4. *to develop within the fraternity a sense of Church, as sense of the apostolate, a sense of being Franciscan (art. 22)*
 - a) actualizing the function of a fraternity in relationship to the Church and the Franciscan Family
 - b) harvesting the ‘divine seed’ planted within the fraternity to produce apostolic, ecclesial and Franciscan activity.

Part 2: Preserving the Vitality of Membership

5. *to discern the vocation of newcomers and admit them into the Order (art. 23a)*
 - a) knowing who is in formation and knowing the qualifications for membership in the Order

- b) knowing how to implement the prayerful process of discernment of vocation
- 6. *to oversee the formation program (art. 23b)*
 - a) choosing, training and evaluating the directors/team of formation
 - b) discovering or adopting the most suitable process of formation to lead to commitment
- 7. *to sustain the permanent commitment of the professed (art. 23c)*
 - a) providing for the professed a sustaining support system within the community
 - b) securing an ongoing group spiritual direction to discover and sustain “God in my life”
- 8. *to help fraternity members who are having particular difficulties (art. 23d)*
 - a) establishing an atmosphere of trust and dialogue to allow people to come
 - b) taking the initiative when problems arise
- 9. *to arrange for the withdrawal of permanent dismissal from the community when this is necessary (art. 23e)*
 - a) knowing the operative conditions for withdrawal or dismissal or dispensation
 - b) acting with kindness and gentleness and using recourse to higher levels

Part 3: Strengthening the Sustaining Forces of Community

- 10. *to plan and carry out the regular and frequent meeting of the fraternity (art. 24a)*
 - a) drawing up and carrying out the meeting’s agenda and time frame: prayer, work, study, dialogue, leisure
 - b) holding regular council meetings: “discern, decide, do”
- 11. *to participate in meetings with other Franciscan entities (art. 24b)*
 - a) taking the initiative and responding to invitations: spiritual life, communal activities and common ministries
 - b) participating actively and appropriately in higher levels of fraternity
- 12. *to provide for the continuing education of the fraternity (art. 24c)*
 - a) maintaining a continuing education program: content and personnel
 - b) developing a resource center for the fraternity: texts, materials, people
- 13. *to engage the member’s support for the needs of the local fraternity and the higher levels of fraternity (art. 25)*
 - a) drawing forth the investment of members’ time, talent and energy
 - b) getting enough money to fulfill life in fraternity on various levels
- 14. *to provide for the spiritual wellbeing of the members and for the vital reciprocity or interchange with Franciscan religious through spiritual*

assistance (art. 26a)

- a) making sure that the whole fraternity has the right spiritual guidance that it needs: for the council, for formation, for the fraternity at large
- b) continuing to establish and maintain good interactive relations with the Franciscan religious

15. *to assure the proper living out of the Secular Franciscan Rule and the fidelity to the Franciscan charism (art. 26b)*

- a) making the formal request for the pastoral and fraternal visits
- b) preparing the fraternity spiritually, psychologically and physically for the pastoral and fraternal visits.