***Someone aspiring to become a member of the Secular Franciscan Order should display at least the following criteria:***

* A Roman Catholic who receives the sacraments on a regular basis;
* A prayerful person;
* A person of peace and justice;
* One who wants to be of service to others;
* One who wants to live more simply, more detached from material things, etc.;
* A person who is well in mind, emotions, psyche, etc.;
* One who understands the implications of a commitment and is willing to make a commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order;
* A person of integrity and honesty;
* A person who knows how to bring balance and harmony into her/his life;
* One who has leadership and/or followership qualities or skills;
* One who has an interest in actively learning (i.e. ongoing formation);
* One who understands the concept of ongoing conversion and desires to do so;
* One who understands that profession is also a commitment to the fraternity and, therefore, he/she wants to live in fraternity.

It is necessary to confirm the genuineness of a candidate’s vocation before admitting him/her to final profession. This is done through a process of discernment by both the fraternity Council and candidate that begins with his/her first visit to a fraternity.

The fraternity members welcome the observer to join them and whenever the opportunity arises, any questions he/she may have regarding the Secular Franciscan Order are answered. If he/she returns for a second visit, one probably has an idea that he/she may be called, and the fraternity assumes that also, for the time being.

The fraternity and the observer are still trying to get to know each other. He/she particularly wants to observe authentic witnessing on the part of the professed members of the fraternity that he/she is visiting. The above continues for successive meetings until one of two things happen:

The observer discerns that he/she is not being called to this way of life, doesn’t need to return to any further meetings and, therefore, the process is ended, or the observer returns and asks to begin a formal program of formation.

The fraternity may require the observer to go through a Period of Orientation prior to beginning the Period of Inquiry. These study sessions are intended to help the observer to understand the Secular Franciscan Order better before embarking on a formal formation program. The program may run three (3) to six (6) months.

(TRF adopted the Period of Orientation in 2003 as a pre-inquiry program).

The fraternity Minister then asks the observer to put the petition in writing with a reason as to why he/she wishes to begin [such] a formal program of formation, and to supply two (2) letters of reference (one from a Roman Catholic priest, the other from a lay person who has some knowledge of Franciscan spirituality).

After the letter of request and letters of reference are received, the fraternity Council discusses them and discerns whether or not to conduct the first of three (3) interviews. If the Council discerns “no”, the process is ended; if the Council discerns “yes”, then the fraternity Minister and Spiritual Assistant interview the potential inquirer. The additional information is brought back to the fraternity Council for further discernment. If the applicant appears to lack some of the expected criteria, the process is ended; if the expected criteria is evident, then the observer is welcomed into a Period of Inquiry (formerly called Postulancy) that may last between three (3) to six (6) months.

Discernment of a vocation by both the Inquirer and the fraternity continues and the process may stop at any time, but if he/she continues to the end of the Period of Inquiry, he/she makes a written request to enter the Period of Candidacy (formerly called Novitiate). The fraternity Minister, Spiritual Assistant and Formation Director interview the potential candidate and bring this information, plus the written request, to the fraternity Council for further discernment. If no signs of a vocation are evident, the process is ended; if a vocation appears to be developing, then the Inquirer is formally received, during a paraliturgy, into the Period of Candidacy. The act of admission is registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.

The Candidate continues his/her formation program and this phase may last between twelve (12) to thirty-six (36) months. The Candidate is given a sponsor to assist him/her on this journey. Discernment by both the Candidate and the fraternity continues and the process may stop at any time. If he/she continues to the end of the Period of Candidacy and believes that the Secular Franciscan Order is the way of life to which he/she is being called, he/she makes a written request to be admitted to Profession. After receipt of the written request, the third in the series of three interviews is held. The fraternity Minister, Spiritual Assistant, Formation Director and Sponsor are present information to the Council for further discernment. If there is doubt about the authenticity of the candidate’s vocation, the process is ended; if all the information and actions of the Candidate verify the presence of a vocation, he/she is admitted to Profession.

The Rite of profession is most often celebrated during Mass because the nature of permanent commitment as a public and ecclesial act is closely tied to the celebration of the Eucharist. The Minister of the fraternity receives the Profession at a suitable place in the sanctuary; the act of Profession is registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.