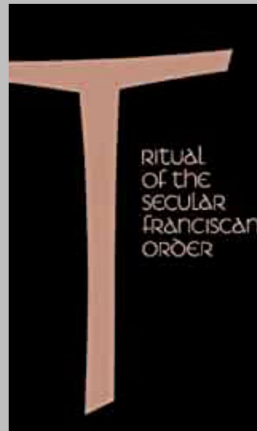


## THE RITUAL – PURE GOLD



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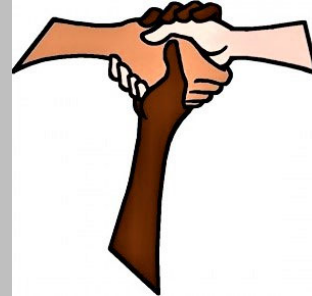
I call the Ritual pure gold because it is a treasure. When we refer to the Ritual, we refer to a book; not the rites in the book. We use the Ritual to perform the rites. In the Ritual we find rites and prayers; Scriptural and Franciscan readings; and a list of optional liturgical prayers. The picture to the right has a golden TAU in its center. This is a symbolic truth. There are deep veins of gold in the Ritual.

TWO MAJOR VEINS OF **GOLD** FOUND IN THE RITUAL'S PRAYERS AND RITES ARE DESCRIPTIONS OF...

- (1) SECULAR FRANCISCAN **IDENTITY** AND **HERITAGE** AND  
(2) **FRATERNITY**, THE PLACE WE BELONG



Our Heritage and Source of Identity



St. Margaret of Cortona Region's Graphic Image

Two very important “golden threads” found in the Ritual are our Secular Franciscan identity and heritage and an understanding that fraternity is a place where we belong. I used the picture of Francis and Clare to illustrate our identity and heritage. Note that their gaze is upward toward the Almighty—that should be an example for us all. The far right picture of a TAU composed of multi-racial hands, describes the attitude of inclusivity that must be present in fraternity.

**(I) WHO WE ARE**  
OUR FRANCISCAN IDENTITY AND HERITAGE

The Rite of Admission begins with the Candidates asking to enter the Secular Franciscan Order so that they may live more intensely and faithfully the grace of their Baptism. They seek to follow Jesus according to the teaching and example of St Francis and to be of service to all, as a secular person, for the glory of God.

And

In the Rite of Profession, the candidates ask:

*...to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life.*

By faithfully living the articles of the Rule, they clothe themselves with our Franciscan identity and make it visible to the Church and to the world.

In the Rite of Admission, there are six different requests in that one statement– 1. to live more intensely and faithfully their Baptismal promises; 2. to follow Christ; 3. to follow the example of St. Francis; 4. to serve others; 5. to live as a secular person; 6. and all for the glory of God. They seek to follow Jesus according to the teachings and example of St Francis and to be of service to all, as a secular person, for the glory of God. Before being admitted to the OFS, the candidates must understand the significance of this statement.

The Rite of Profession contains the most significant life-changing statement. They are making a permanent commitment to the gospel life. This will be the identity they make visible to the Church and to the world. It is life altering and there will be no turning back.

## (2) WHY WE GATHER LIFE IN FRATERNITY AND A SENSE OF BELONGING

An example of why we gather in fraternity is found at the end of the Rite of Admission.

The minister says to the new candidates:

*... [this] Secular Franciscan Fraternity ... very gladly promises to help you in your journey with friendship, prayer and the witness of its life.*

*You, on the other hand, strengthen our fraternity in numbers, by virtue of your presence and participation, and through the sharing of your special gifts. You are most welcome!*

1. The fraternity promises to support the candidates on their journey.
2. The fraternity also expects the candidates to enrich the fraternity.
3. That's what it means to belong! Mutual love and support.

At the end of the Rite of Admission, the minister says this to the new candidates. The fraternity pledges friendship, prayer and a good witness. We expect the candidates to strengthen the fraternity and to share their gifts with the fraternity. This is a mutual exchange of love and support.

THE ROLE OF SYMBOLS AND GIFTS  
IN THE CEREMONY OF WELCOMING AND  
THE RITES OF ADMISSION AND PROFESSION

Ceremony of Welcoming	Rite of Admission	Rite of Profession
Biography of Saint Francis and [my addition] Saint Clare	The Rule of Life and the TAU	The Holy Gospels, <b>Where Customary:</b> San Damiano Crucifix, Candle, and/or Ring

Symbolic gifts are very important because they convey meaning that touches the heart and at times, has an effect deeper than words can express. Music, gesture, images, gifts all enhance prayer because they engage the senses as well as the intellect. Some symbols are external such as the TAU and others, such as the Rule need to be internalized. Biographies inform the seekers intellect and spiritual understanding of the Franciscan charism. These biographies should inform and challenge them to live as Francis and Clare did. During the Rite of Admission we give the new candidates the Rule and the TAU. The Rule must become a living part of them and the TAU is an external symbol that reminds them and others about who they are. The only required gift for the Rite of Profession is the Holy Gospels. The Gospel is much more than a symbol. It is to be internalized because to profess the Gospel, one must know the Gospel. The customary gifts of the crucifix, candle and ring have deep symbolic meaning.

## POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING THE RITUAL

- † The rites and prayers in the Ritual are meant to be celebrated publicly in the midst of the fraternity. They are not composed to be private devotionals, although they do contain words of wisdom and spiritual depth.
- † Advance preparation and focused intention are vital for the celebrations to be meaningful.
- † When we gather for these occasions, everyone is expected to be a participant. No one is a spectator. Amen!
- † The most point to remember is that when we gather,  
we are in the presence of **GOD**.

Point 1: the Rites and prayers are communal in nature. They deeply connect the assembly to God and each other. They help us remember who we are and provide spiritual renewal for all of us.

Point 2: Without preparation and awareness the words might simply be read without regard to their deeper meaning. Preparation increases the possibility that spiritual understanding will enter hearts and accomplish its purpose.

Point 3: These ceremonies are meant to be experienced in community because God has formed us into one body. Our common beliefs bind us together.

Point 4: God is present when two or more are gathered in His name. See Matthew 18:20.

## ONE LAST COMMENT

- Please .... Don't forget to include your spiritual assistant in the planning from the very beginning; not as an afterthought.
- He, or she in my case, can be an asset in the planning. Most spiritual assistants want to be involved to give you a helping hand.
  - And now on to Layna and Justin who will give you more detail on the Ritual
    - as a Formation Resource.



Look at the pictures of hands reaching out and hands entwined. This should be the relationship that exists between the fraternity and its spiritual assistant. And if it exists, it is a blessing to both.