



HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR THOSE SEEKING TO JOIN THE TRADITIONAL THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

(Directed by the Traditional Capuchin Franciscans of Morgon, France)

I. About Tertiary Life: Postulancy, Novitiate (habit, novice meetings), Profession, Rule.

- A. POSTULANCY: Ordinarily, where there are established Fraternities of the Third Order, there is a postulancy period of at least 3 months for those seeking entrance. *“Postulants shall be briefly instructed in Christian doctrine, in the life of our holy Father Francis, and in the Third Order”* (Const. Art. 12). Where there is no fraternity (as would be the case here), candidates enter as *Isolated Tertiaries* and the postulancy period is waived. At the end of the postulancy, *“those who have been found suitable shall be admitted to the novitiate of the fraternity by the Director on the advice of the Council”* (Const. Art. 15).
- B. NOVIATE: According to the Rule (and Church law) the novitiate must last at least *one full and uninterrupted year*. Because of the current difficult circumstances, the Capuchins of Morgon have extended the length of the novitiate for all their Third Order novices to *18 months*.
1. The Novitiate begins with a clothing ceremony in which the candidate receives the habit of the Third Order: A large brown scapular and a cord with 5 (or 3) knots — both worn under one’s clothing. One chooses a new name on this day.
 2. The purpose of this time of probation is two-fold: 1) To give the novices the opportunity to test their strength and perseverance. 2) To enable the fraternity to ascertain their fitness.
 3. Besides the usual monthly meetings of the Fraternity that they are *required* to attend, there are Novice Instruction meetings (also usually held once a month). It is of utmost importance that the Novices attend all the NI’s. The NI’s are intended *“to prepare the novices that they may afterwards dedicate themselves to God by profession, with a full realization of their obligations”* (Const. Art. 20). In these Instructions the novice will learn about the life and spirit of St. Francis, the nature, purpose and history of the Third Order, the regulations of the Holy Rule, and how to attain perfection while living in the tumult of the world. They will also learn the works of piety, charity and of the apostolates of Tertiary life.
 4. *“Towards the end of the novitiate the Director, if he thinks fit, shall test the knowledge and intentions of the novices, and seek the advice of the Council as to whether they are worthy of being admitted to profession”* (Const. Art. 23).
- C. PROFESSION: *“Profession in the Third Order is a solemn religious act whereby one of the faithful, moved by divine grace, dedicates himself to God, promising to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world, by living according to the commandments of God and the Rule of our holy Father Francis...”* Those who profess are not bound by vows but by a promise, which is *not* binding under pain of sin. Profession is for life.

II. Preliminary Requirements

- A. From the Rule Ch. 1§1: *“Only those may be received as members who have completed their 14th year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the Apostolic See.”*
- B. From the Rule Ch. 1§2: *“Married women may not be received without the husband’s knowledge and consent, unless their confessor judges otherwise.”*

C. Const. Art. 11: “*Since the continual growth of the Third Order should be in holiness rather than in numbers, careful inquiry shall be made whether candidates are fit for entry into the Order, according to the conditions laid down in the Rule and these Constitutions. Those are fit for membership, who, called by divine grace, desire to dedicate themselves to God in a special way in the world; that is, wish to be pleasing to God and to be of service to the Church and to human society according to the spirit of St. Francis.*”

D. Further Requirements

1. Required by the Traditional Capuchins of Morgon, France: Candidates must be “*in accord with the doctrinal position of the Capuchin Fathers of Morgon and the priests of the Society of St. Pius X in the present religious combat.*”
2. One must not already be a member of another Third Order (only with a special indult may one belong to two Third Orders [Const. Art. 13]). It is possible — under the proper conditions — to switch from one order to another.
3. One must have decided to combat the spirit of the world, to respect the rules of Christian modesty in dress (Pope Benedict XV called the Tertiary sisters to be “*an object lesson of holy modesty to other matrons and maidens*), to master one’s language and as to avoid gossip and vain quarrels.
4. One must be ready to follow the formation program for the postulancy and the novitiate, and to participate at the regular (monthly) meetings of the Fraternity (except in the case of a major impediment). Note: *As noted above, ordinarily, where there are established Fraternities of the Third Order, there is a 3 month postulancy period for those seeking entrance. Where there is no fraternity (as would be the case here), the postulancy period is waived.*

III. How to Apply:

- A. Be sure that you SATISFY THE PRELIMINARY CONDITIONS for becoming a Franciscan Tertiary.
- B. CHOOSE A PRIEST who is familiar with you (your director, confessor, pastor or one who has been any of these in the past) and ask him if is willing to write a letter recommending you for the Third Order.
- C. SEND THIS PRIEST’S CONTACT INFORMATION to Fr. Jacques Emily — St. Aloysius Retreat Center — P.O. Box 1379 — Los Gatos, CA 95031-1379. Fr. Emily will send to the priest you have chosen a letter explaining the required dispositions of a candidate to the Third Order, thus enabling him to determine your fitness for the Third Order. Your priest will need this letter from Fr. Emily *before* he can write the letter of recommendation for you.
- D. WRITE A LETTER TO FR. EMILY explaining the reason why you desire to join the Third Order of St. Francis (send it together with the contact information you will be sending in “C.” above).
- E. INVESTITURE: After Fr. Emily receives the letter of recommendation, he may pay a visit (if there are a good number of candidates) for the investiture ceremony in which the candidates receive the habit and are enrolled as novices. If Fr. Emily does not come to conduct the ceremony himself, he will give faculties to your local priest to conduct the ceremonies.

For information on the Franciscan Third Order Rule and Way of Life see our tri-fold leaflet entitled: “*Are you called to join the Traditional Third Order of Saint Francis?*” available at: spx.org/third_orders/tosf/tosf.htm.