

**THE TAU COMMUNITY OF INTERFAITH  
FRANCISCANS**

*(Franciscan Abbey of Peace and Compassion)*

**GOVERNING DOCUMENT**  
and  
**(Resonance Agreement)**



*"Embracing the Natural World- The Franciscan Soul"*

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**P**RAYERS FOR THE ORDER OF TAU INTERFAITH  
FRANCISCANS OF SAINT FRANCIS

**H**oly Father Mother God, you have bound us together in your love and united us in prayer and service.

**L**ook with favor on all the Monastic's, Oblates, Friends and Associates of the Order of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans of the Order of St. Francis.

**B**less us in the work which you have given us to do and be ever near us to comfort and support us, that we may love and serve together here in the spirit and power of your teaching and come at last to your eternal home where, with God our Creator, with Christ and all the Prophets; with Saint Francis of Assisi; St. Mary Magdalene; St. John the Beloved Disciple and with Blessed Mary, all the Archangels, Angels, Saints and Mother Earth, we will live forever.

Amen.

**PRAYER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**Breathe on me breath of God;  
Fill me with life anew;  
That I may love what thou dost love,  
And do what thou wouldst do.**

Help me:  
To Act Justly  
To love tenderly  
And to walk humbly  
Before you Lord God.  
Micah 6:8

## THE OFFICIAL PROMULGATION

To All Professed Monastic's:

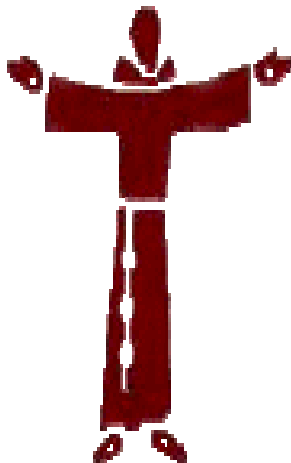
By the authority invested in me by The Founding Document and at the direction of the First General Assembly of the Custodians, I hereby ratify the publication of *The Founding Governing Document, First Revision*.

This revision constitutes the authorized Rule of Life for all professed Monastic's of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Community of Saint Francis.

**Given this 17<sup>th</sup> day of July in the year of Our Lord, 2009.**

May peace, love and wisdom abide with us always!

*Rev. Brother. Sean Mary Jude Bradley, TCOSF*  
Spiritual Founder and Director



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## I. PREAMBLE

1. The Tau Community of Saint Francis is an Interfaith Monastic spiritual/religious community of men and women who live a life consecrated by vows and directed by a common rule of life, The Founding Document.
2. We believe ourselves to be part of the Divine Flame and that that same Indwelling Flame is the common factor in all life. Knowing that we are all one and that all life has value, we take seriously our responsibility for others and for all creation. Consequently, we honor the one eternal law of the universe: we hold that all things and events are part of an indivisible whole and that the highest law of life is to do no harm to any living creature.

*I have beheld a spark of the Divine in humanity.  
That sparks, the universal and indwelling God's Spirit, Must be nurtured  
as the flickering flame. Is shielded from the driving rain.*

## II. THE FOUNDING DOCUMENT

*I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, hears my words and acts on them. That one is like one building a house, which dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when a flood arose, the river burst against that house but could not shake it, because it had been well built. (Luke 6:47-48)*

1. The form of religious life which we choose calls us to serve the Lay Monastic Life both in the world as a virtual community and as in an enclosed monastic community. Our work as religious, the unfolding of the awareness of our divine nature, can become lost in the tumult of our involvement in society. Therefore, a need exists for a structure which assists our members to focus on our spiritual work while living fully in the secular world.
2. The Founding Document of our Order outlines the method by which the Companions may structure their lives to work, live together, study and pray. The Founding Document, as a rule of life, does not stifle growth, but rather, strengthens the community by providing mutually understood principles of the religious life. The Founding Document makes visible our cooperation in community.
3. Regulations are useful as long as they serve, but not when they dominate. The Founding Document is not meant to be a burden, nor is it meant to be

complete. Its purpose is to help the Companions to discover and experience freedom (the responsibility of being human) and to be faithful to personal beliefs and the journey along the path. Our Founding Document should be thought of as the traveler's staff; it is neither the way or the wayfarer. It is the assistance needed to tread the path less-traveled.

### III. MISSION

**You shall love God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with your entire mind; and your neighbor as yourself.** *(Luke 10:27)*

1. Religious life is an adventure in faith incarnated within our daily human situations. Our religious vocation emerges from the very depths of human experience; birth, life, death and our need to give meaning to these events. We strive to perceive divine order in the universe and to work with it.
2. The nature of our Order is to be open to widening the spiritual horizon. We seek to remove all that is not essential and, therefore, encumbering us, and we effect this by a peaceful and continuous revision of the method of our life and work. The chief task of our Order, through The Founding Document, is to offer renewal, consecration and transformation, both of ourselves and of creation. The Order does not exist for itself; it exists to guide and support the Companions. It is an active element, like the yeast in the Gospel parable.
3. By our lifestyle, we strive to inspire others to choose healthier and more mature ways of thinking and believing, grounded in the Great Commandment. All the people of God are called to holiness; religious are called to be on the cutting edge of the Gospel for the sake of the Kingdom.
4. We experience a special calling, not away from the world, but rather, into an interior world, all the while remaining connected with society by our work, ministry, social activities and families. As we draw back into ourselves in order to grow and to bind ourselves back to God in prayer, we find that we are also drawn outward to others as creative, loving and supportive persons. As vowed religious we respond to an inner call which demands that we evaluate our lives and model them according to our values and beliefs. We must then implement our vision in our daily lives. We pledge our personal and collective lives as channels of the transforming reality of God's presence in all creation.
5. Most of the Companions will come from the working professions. We are not a clerical community comprised of theologians. Our professional work lives will cause us to mix daily with people in all walks of life. Our

inspiration will lead us to select and shape our own ministries. At all times, we must be pastorally creative, flexible and mobile, depending on the needs to be met. As a public witness of our spiritual support for each Companion's ministry, the Ceremony of Commissioning will be conducted at the request of a Companion undertaking a new ministry.

6. We strive for wholeness in our lives. *The glory of God is a person fully alive (Ireneaus)*. We believe that we will each become whole as long as our lifestyles express our greatest values. This process begins when we discontinue our attempts to have the world meet our needs and begin instead to try meeting the needs of others. By our works of love we strive to bring about a climate conducive to transforming life into an existence of peace, love, freedom and hope. We look to the Works of Charity as the foundation of our working to meet the needs of the world:

## THE WORKS OF CHARITY

- To feed the hungry
  - To give drink to the thirsty
  - To clothe the naked
  - To nurse the sick
  - To visit those shut-off from the world
  - To work for freedom, justice and peace
  - To instruct the ignorant
  - To counsel the doubtful
  - To comfort the sorrowful
  - To forgive all injuries
  - To work for the reconciliation of persons with God
  - To bind up the wounds of the disenfranchised (Matthew 23:4; Isaiah. 61:1)
  - To pray for all
7. We perform our works with compassion and empathy, always aware of the interdependence of all living things. It is the holy omnipresence of God in all creation, the Christ, which animates us.

*Love is the spirit of this order and service is its works.  
And this is our way: to live together in peace, to seek truth in  
love, and to help one another in joy.  
(St. Basil the Great)*

## IV. ECUMENISM / INTERFAITH

**Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.**

(1 Peter 3:8)

1. We are neither a clerical nor a lay community; rather, we are a religious monastic community. All the Companions carry the pilgrim's staff and are still on the journey. The Members of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis are not bound together by the teaching or doctrine of a particular denomination, but rather, we are united by The Founding Document based on Interfaith Ecumenism.
2. Although we belong corporately to no single denomination, we belong to religion in the broadest sense of that word; that is, from its Latin root *religare*: "to bind back" (to God.) This binding back to God is portrayed by the Order's emblem - the Tau symbol representing the monastic with arms raised to heaven, symbolizing the aspiring soul yearning ever toward reunification with the Eternal One. The purpose of redemption is to restore us to the image of God.
3. Our Wisdom Tradition is Interfaith. Some Companions may choose to follow the historical/scriptural Jesus while other Companions may seek the Cosmic Christ. Each Companion is free to select the denomination to which s/he wishes to belong. We find that what we seek is already within us and seeks us, too. If we open ourselves to that spiritual force, we will find all the answers we seek. If we try to conform ourselves to doctrines and so-called scriptural and hierarchical authority only for the sake of denominational membership, we give ourselves less than we deserve.
4. The interreligious ecumenism of our Order requires a genuine flexibility. It implies a loyal effort to get along with others as we strive sincerely to respect the different opinions and creeds of the other Companions. Although we each have our own basic personal beliefs, we do not try to force those onto others. Instead, we strive to be living examples of the truth we find. Truth is larger than any of us and every partial truth contributes to the total truth. In addition, we must always remember that a truth is not the truth for an individual until it has been tested and found to be sound.
5. Our vocation calls us to sacrifice our own opinions, ideas, vanities and securities and, in their place, express the deepest values of our lives: love, truth, compassion, health of body, mind and spirit, and beauty in all its forms, whether in nature, culture or the spiritual life. We are exhorted to be thankful for the variety of gifts and different personalities of the Companions. Our Houses should have an atmosphere of openness and

respectful acceptance. *In essentials, unity. In interpretation, liberty. In all things, charity.* Together, all the Companions of the Order will create a place in which there is room for everyone who sincerely strives to live the religious life. Each Companion's manner of treading the spiritual path is respected. Our Founding Document sets the Companions on the path together as traveling companions - pilgrims on the way to heaven.

## V. UNITY IN COMMUNITY

**How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!**

(Psalm 133:1)

1. In the family of God, there are solitary souls seeking spiritual community who are unwilling to sacrifice individuality. All people seek a sense of belonging, a sense of community with other like-minded people. We all need a social organization with supportive structures and attitudes.
2. The Companions of the Order cooperate in the task of building a loving, supportive community, whether living singly, with their own families, or together in one of our community Houses. There can be no community unless the one and only reference point is to build together in God.
3. In our diversity, we find our unity. Unity does not require uniformity. It is a celebration of individuality, interrelatedness, and interdependence. We look to one another for encouragement, assistance, and support.
4. God's love is without limit and non-selective. It is not bound by the limits of our own love and acceptance. Our vows are the response to Christ's call to inclusiveness: *Come to me, all...* (Mt. 11:28). Exclusiveness is the product of our prejudices and fears. In our admission process, we look for accommodations for inclusivity rather than impediments for exclusivity. By the living of our vows, we challenge and dismantle exclusiveness and act with charity toward all.
5. Unity is the work of God who created all and whose one life force unifies all creation. Our unity in the Order is our availability to God through our Founding Document. We put our own potential and talents at the service of God so that the unity of the Order will grow stronger.

## VI. THE SEVEN VOWS

**So I shall always sing of your name, fulfilling the vows I have taken,  
day after day.**

(Psalm 61:8)

**The vow of Providence is by far, the greatest gift of all the vows or promises that man or woman can make before God and each other to the Supreme Source. Providence is:**

### **As a gift;**

" The one source of all; whatever I may be, whatever I may experience or process exists WITHIN God; there can be no other reality, and this includes the Sovereign Freedom of a son or daughter of the Divine. As a friend and sister of the Cosmic Christ ( begotten not made) - and with this consciousness from the beginning, given a conscious heart-will and understanding, to recognise and celebrate the complete and unbroken Oneness with my Source, in loving surrender.

All that I need, by Nature; every desire of my heart; every kind of skill and wisdom come from this One Source, which is imaged within my True self, but which in fear, vanity and pride, my ego forgets. Yet, Life itself is within God. All Truth. Beauty and Goodness are totally available to me and to all consciousness. Why then do I fear ? Fear Death, loneliness, loss and time ? They too have Divine origin; The " non-holy" is entirely and illusion of the Separated Self, or Egoic illusion. God love All; gives of everything to All; How, then, can death of Form be less than a blessing ? It is , in Wesley's phrase, " the Crown of endless mercies ". God is imminent, in all time, in all places, and God is Transcendent ... above and beyond everything; more than any individuate or collective consciousness can conceive; we can only BECOME that which , indeed, we ARE...- (but asleep !!!!)

### **As a Way of Life.**

Following upon what has been affirmed;- the way of life, founded upon Divine Providence, can be one of utter and complete trust and confidence; of generous and adventurous living, free of lethargy or self-centred anxiety. Silence and stillness can be vibrant and dynamic, in the Mindfulness of Divine Being. In our faithfulness to Love, in relationship with one another, our responsibility to the Nature, our divine origin and essence demands that we are diligent, honest and

discerning, wise and compassionate, knowing when we need the renewal of our strength; knowing when to "pass the baton"; knowing we are not alone in seeking to be the Kingdom we long for; knowing that competitiveness is the last disguise of God- forgotten fear. There is no greater dignity than to do an honest day's work; love demands no less; to attempt more is exploitation and vanity. The grace of providence moves us to recognise and joyfully fulfil whatever is "the next thing to be done ", and when necessary, to accept with grace the help and care of our brothers and sisters.

Providence renders fantasy meaningless;...The dreary round of "what might have been;" regrets or ambitions; rather, to be so thankful, that envy, resentment and bitterness have no purchase upon our awareness. In such a way of life, Trust in Divine Providence is our True Hope.

**Endorsed by the Custodians representing the Interfaith Franciscan's Monastic Community. They are:**

- i. Rev Brother Sean TCOSF (Brother General)
- ii. Rev Mother Olivea TCOSF (Abbess)
- iii. Sister Theresa TCOSF
- iv. Sister Elaine TCOSF
- v. Sister Julie TCOSF

1. We each desire to seek God with all our life and to love God with all our heart. The vows are the personal way of embodying our love for God and for all creation. We are consecrated by our vows to a special mission: to bring others to the realization of the Light which shines within each person and unifies all creation part of Franciscan Spirituality.

2. The vows represent our affiliation with the ancient teachings and Principles of the Essene's Tree Of Life.

**3. Our vows are:**

- Simplicity of Life,
- Purity of Heart,
- Obedience,
- Stability (Enclosure),
- Providence in God for our daily needs.
- Non-Violence

- Universal Citizenship

These vows are not viewed in the traditional sense of swearing an oath; rather, they are seen as a promise to strive after the virtues expressed therein.

By consecrating our life by vows, we concentrate our personal energies on living the implications of those vows in our daily lives. A vowed life means that the meaning and practice of the religious life becomes our central concern. The Founding Document then assists with the explicit living of the vows. When we vow our lives, we publicly declare our strong desire to be a center of value radiation in our society. This vow concentration enables us to stand up as strong witnesses to our faith.

4. The vows have neither ecclesiastical nor legal binding status; they bind only in our hearts. Since the vows are an agreement between God and ourselves which we choose to honor, no other authority can act as an intermediary in that relationship. All vows are received by the Founder represented by our Director General on behalf of all the Companions.
5. The official profession of vows constitutes Companion status (membership) in the Order. Admission to vows and continued Companionship in the Order is dependent on an acceptance and living of the way of life outlined in The Founding Document. No Companion in the Order may decide if another Companion may renew his/her annual vows, except as outlined herein. If a Companion does not renew his/her annual vows, that Companion is considered as having resigned from the Order.
6. A person who wishes to enter the Order makes written application to the Director General. Upon acceptance, a Master or Mistress of Novices is assigned and these two will mutually develop a course of studies for the Foundation Program which includes six to twelve months of Postulancy and twelve – twenty four months of Novitiate. (This period of time may be changed as the Director General deems appropriate). The postulant must make a written request to be advanced to the novitiate. Likewise, the novice must submit a written application to be permitted to profess first vows. The Director General will keep all professed Companions advised of the status of those persons in the Foundation Program.
7. The first profession of vows is made at the end of the Foundation Program. The vows are renewed annually for three years, after which time the Companion will decide either to take life vows or to continue indefinitely with annual vows. The renewal of annual vows is made on the anniversary of the first profession of vows and the second and third

renewals must have the approval of the Director General. To be permitted to profess life vows, the Companion must make written application to the Abbot/Abbess who will present the request at the annual meeting of all Companions (General Assembly or Days of Renewal in the alternating years). Those Companions present will vote to decide if the Companion may take life vows. The Abbot/Abbess may, at his/her discretion, waive either the three year waiting period for final vows or override the decision of the Companions.

- 7 The Abbot/Abbess may dismiss a Companion from the Order if that Companion has not submitted a satisfactory annual report to the Headquarters. If this is the case, the Abbot/Abbess will, with the approval of at least one other Companion, send out a thirty day notice to all Companions, outlining the proposed dismissal. A Companion who demonstrates a consistent, fundamental unsuitability to live the religious life, as evidenced by persistent disobedience, refusal to accept the obligations of the Order as embodied in The Founding Document, or who has been the culpable cause of imminent and very grave or exterior scandal or harm to the community, may be dismissed. In this case, the Director General will call an Advisory Council of three Companions and one Associate (drawn by blind lots), the Director General, and the accused Companion. This Advisory Council will meet (either by phone or in person) within fourteen days of being assembled and will decide if the person accused may continue as a Companion in the Order. After the decision is reached, the Advisory Council is disbanded.
8. A Companion may resign at any time by notifying the Abbot/Abbess in writing of his/her intention. The Tau Symbol and any other personal effects representing the Order are to be returned to the Mother House as it is the property of the Order.

## VII. THE VOW OF SIMPLICITY OF LIFE (Poverty)

**Give me neither poverty nor wealth; Provide me only with the food I need.** *(Proverbs 30:8)*

"A certain ruler asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honour your father and mother.' He replied, 'I have kept all these since my youth.' When Jesus heard this, he said to him, 'There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to

the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me. Jesus looked at him and said, 'How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!' " [Lk. 18:18-23]

"Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need." [Acts 4:32-5]

1. All that we have comes from God. We do not own our possessions; rather, we are the stewards of the gifts we have received. We use our goods in the best manner, dedicating the use of our resources, both possessions and abilities, to the betterment of all creation. By the practice of generosity, we detach ourselves from the false security of and slavery to possessions.
2. The spirit of simplicity is to live in the gladness of today. Our life as religious is to be known by simplicity and service. We are bound to avoid waste, limiting personal expenditures to what is proper to our health and well-being. We live more by our needs and less by unbridled desires based on consumerism. We seek to rid our lives of the complications of the competition of the world. We cast off useless burdens so that we might break down artificial barriers of privilege based on money, status, possessions, race, gender and affectional orientation.
3. By this vow, we reverence our mother earth and we refuse to exploit her. We use only what she can give without depriving the rest of the world. We acknowledge our own dependence on her and we dare to hold out our hands to ask for and to receive from others what we lack.
4. Each Companion is responsible for earning his/her own livelihood in a manner which entails no evil consequence. Each is responsible for his/her own finances and to contribute to the support of the Headquarters and of the House where s/he lives.
8. The Order will own no real estate. No Companion or group of Companions, including the General Assembly, may enter into a transaction which binds another Companion or the Order as a whole. Nothing in this document prevents a Companion from owning personal and/or real property.

- 6 The Tau Interfaith Franciscans Community of Saint Francis is an unincorporated charity in the United Kingdom.

## VIII. THE VOW OF PURITY OF HEART

*I love you just as God loves me; Remain in my love.*  
(John 15:9)

1. Purity of heart does not mean breaking with human affections, nor does it mean an indifference towards others. It demands a *metanoia*: a change of heart. It calls for the purification of one's heart for the transformation of one's life by the active love of others. It shows a striving toward at-onement with all creation.
2. This vow is not concerned only with sexuality. It speaks to ethical and moral behavior with people on a daily basis. It calls us to take care of others in our dealings with them. We take a personal interest in others as we recognize the Indwelling Light in all. Just as egoism disintegrates, so true purity of heart builds up and fortifies.
3. This vow requires total dedication of one's entire person. The promise of sexual chastity must not be a means to control others, but rather, a way to consecrate one's loving person to the work of the Gospel.
4. There are different life vocations within the Interfaith Church: single, celibate and married. Our Order, recognizing the validity of these different vocations, seeks to incorporate all of them into its structure.
5. We must always take care that the religious life not be identified primarily by the absence of sexual relations. It must always be characterized by the Companion's actions as co-workers for the Kingdom.
6. By this vow, we surrender ourselves to God's service. We yield ourselves, heart, mind, body and feelings, to the up-building of all creation. We put aside love of self for love of others. The outward sign of this vow is the performance of the Works of Charity.
7. Purity of Heart places us in the embrace of the arms of the Everlasting Love.

## IX. THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE

*Listen to me, You that pursue righteousness, You that seek God.*

(Isaiah 51:1)

1. Each Companion, alone and in community, places him/herself in unity with The Founding Document. This alignment provides the Order with the necessary structure by which Companions may function together. The unification with The Founding Document provides the foundation for our religious community.
2. Each Companion is responsible for his/her own actions. S/he assumes, by this vow, a co-responsibility for our Order, both within our Houses and in the Order at-large.
3. This vow does not demand absolute obedience, which is due only to God. It does demand obedience to The Founding Document and to the decisions of the General Assembly. Freedom is the watchword of our Order and all obedience to persons must always be limited by the bounds of conscience.
4. Obedience (from the Latin *ob* + *audire*, to listen to) does not mean just listening to an outside entity; it is promising to listen carefully to our own inner authority, guided by reason, compassion, constant study and prayer, and then, after finding the will of God, to integrate it into our own life.

## X. THE VOW OF NON-VIOLENCE

...they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. (Isaiah 2:4)

1. We recognize the essential unity of all creation and we work to resolve human conflicts by love and understanding rather than by force. We work to put an end to fear, aggression, violence, coercion, exploitation and injustice. We endeavor to practice forgiveness and to forget past transgressions. We object to and renounce any recourse to violence and unlawful force. We detest war and the preparation for war and we seek its elimination. We abhor nuclear armament.
2. We work for the protection of the environment and the animal life of our mother earth. We preserve all her natural resources.
3. We struggle with all peoples for liberation, peace, human dignity, rights and integrity.

4. *By this vow, every Companion must be ready, on-call at all times, for the defense of justice with the non-violent arms of love. We must challenge the sources of violence, war, oppression and persecution. We must hold back the forces of darkness and transmute them into Light.*

## **XI. THE VOW OF UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP**

*Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but all citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the chief cornerstone.  
(Ephesians 2:19-20)*

1. We believe we are members of the household of God and, as such, we do not consider ourselves citizens of any one country. National barriers are artificial and symbolize a broken humanity.
2. We proclaim the complete equality of all persons. We renounce nationalism, racism, sexism, colonialism and all discrimination.
3. We refuse to participate in the harming or governing of other peoples.
4. We acknowledge the beliefs and cultures of all peoples. We share that which we have in common and respect our differences.
5. By this vow, we unite ourselves with all of creation.

## **XII. THE VOW OF STABILITY**

1. We recognize the importance of ensuring stability for all the Companions within our monastic community. We achieve this stability by formally entering a non verbal contract with God that we will remain enclosed by the creation of no go areas for the general public. The areas that are off limits to non Companions will be known as our monastic enclosure.
2. We strive as monastic's to uphold the right of monastic enclosure by safeguarding the spiritual values and way of life from unnecessary exposure to the affairs of the world.
3. Enclosure maintains that stability so essential for the safe running of a monastic house without interference.

### XIII. THE VOW OF PROVIDENCE

1. By this vow, we unite ourselves completely with God for all our daily needs. The taking of the vow of Providence to God is an act of complete trust and faith in a God who sees into our hearts and trust implicitly that He will provide for our daily bread.
2. As Companions vowed to God, we are not encouraged as individuals, or as a community, to make any formal application for direct funding either for our survival or to support our ministry.
3. The vow of Providence is an act of personal and collective faith by all the Companions of the Order who believe implicitly in a God of Abundance.
4. As members of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis, we follow in the footsteps of our Founder and rely totally upon our Father Mother God to provide our needs, not our wants.

**Important Notes:  
(From Brother Sean, dated 16<sup>th</sup> July 2011)**

Members of the online community of the Franciscan Abbey of Peace and Compassion are invited to take all of the 7 vows.

Living outside a conventional monastic community, the monastic needs to make several adjustments to 'Vow of Providence.' Common sense should prevail when embracing the spirit of the vow and making the necessary adaptations to suit your personal circumstances re: employed by another or self employed.

The simplest way to avoid duplicity is to set up a household bank account in the name of say, Brother or Sister Matilda's Healing Ministry. Then all income and expenditure can be shown on a simple balance sheet to account for all your personal needs as a monastic living from your monastery without walls in the world.

*In conclusion, it is wise to keep a record of income and expenses on a weekly/monthly basis to honor the 'Spirit of the Vow of Providence.'*

### XIV. PRAYER AND SPIRITUAL READING

But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to God who, seeing in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6:6)

1. Time must be spent each day to unfold our relationship with God. *The core of all our work, the calm that provides us refuge at the center of the cyclone of daily*

*life and gives us strength for struggle (both inwardly, in personal transformation, and outwardly, in living the creative life), is prayer. (Brother Sean)*

2. Every Companion is to pray daily using whatever form best suits his/her communication with the Transcendent. In the monastic
3. The Companions of the Tau Monastic Community will come together 3 times daily for communal prayer. Morning -Noon and Evening.
4. Each House may structure a prayer routine which best meets all the Companion's needs.
5. Each House is to have an area designated solely for prayer. This may be a separate chapel and/or a shrine set up by each Companion.
6. In our never-ending search for Truth, each Companion is expected to spend at least thirty minutes daily in spiritual reading.



## **XV. RELIGIOUS CLOTHING**

I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe...  
(Job 29:14)

1. We believe that reunification with God is a requirement for the wholeness and happiness of all people. Just as the Companions of the Order strive for

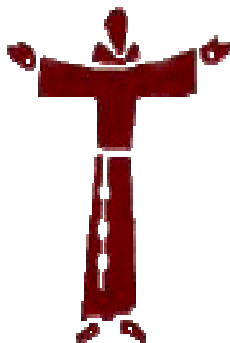
this reunification, so too does all creation. To keep our message hidden would be in direct conflict with The Founding Document, which is the driving force in the life of our Order.

2. To be effective as religious, our commitment to our Order and to our Franciscan Way of Life as Interfaith Franciscans must be visible both to ourselves and to those around us. Although the example of a vowed religious lifestyle must be the primary source of instruction of and witness to others, the Works of Interfaith Worship and Dialogue, Providence, Compassion and Charity are also of great importance. Many will come to us looking for answers. They will ask us to bind up their wounds; the wounds of disenfranchisement. Our accessibility to others is the key which will unlock many hearts.
3. Those outside our Order will need to be able to recognize our special vocation and commitment. Making ourselves readily available to others is a great sacrifice as it puts our personal resources of time, energy, and knowledge at their disposal. We will be expected both to open ourselves up and to be channels of the Divine. Our distinct religious clothing identifies us as consecrated and dedicated religious. We dare to use it to express our availability to others.
4. The habit serves to foster a spirit of unity within our religious community. It reminds us of our link with the religious of past centuries and is an outward sign to each other of our willingness to share a common life. Our habit consists of an ankle-length pale blue (denim) hooded tunic, a dark blue scapular and white rope cord. Sisters will not wear a hood but are encouraged to wear a veil covering their hair and head in keeping with other interfaith religious traditions. Postulants will wear suitable plain attire until their official reception as novices when they will be given the habit but not the scapular. This is only given when one takes their vows.
5. The Tau symbol of our Order is worn around the neck by novices and all professed members.
6. Those Companions who have professed life vows may wear a plain silver vow ring on the ring finger of the right hand. Whenever the Community gathers for prayer, the use of the habit and choir mantle is strongly encouraged.
5. It is recognized that it will not always be appropriate to wear religious clothing, however, whenever practical, it is encouraged that it be worn in public and at home. Whenever a Companion is representing the Order on official business, the habit is to be worn.

## **XVI. TITLES**

And stretching out his hand toward his disciples he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers and my sisters!  
For whoever does the will of God the creator is my brother and sister and mother."  
(Matthew 12: 48-50)

1. Religious titles are not to be considered as marks of superiority nor as barriers between laity and religious. They are instead a sign of Companionship in our Order. They represent our special vocation and our commitment to our vows.
2. All Companions and novices of the Order are to be addressed as Brother or Sister. This is an integral part of the religious name. A Companion may take a name in religion. A renewal of vows service should be conducted to formalize this change of name.
3. After the profession of first vows, a Companion has the right to use the initials TCOSF at the end of his/her name.
4. Clergy may use the title appropriate for their denomination when conducting church business which requires a member of the clergy. Otherwise, the title Brother or Sister is to be used.



## XVII. HOUSES

...but as for me and my household, we will serve God.  
(Joshua 24:15)

1. Our Order is in fact an extended community, a monastery without walls. We live a new pattern of consecrated life, in free-form contemporary units and in a community which transcends physical distance.

2. We live in a rapidly changing and diverse world. The Companions seek to make a home therein and, consequently, there are as many different living arrangements as there are Companions. Because we view our vows in a non-traditional manner, the Companions' expression of individual lifestyle and ministry is not hampered. Every Companion is responsible to live in a manner which reflects the philosophy of our Order as outlined in The Founding Document. Each House is free to implement an internal structure conducive to the well-being and spiritual growth of each Companion living there.
3. Our Houses are to be given a religious name. In addition, each House, mission and ministry of our Order will be identified by a conspicuous sign which indicates it to be a House and/or apostolate of the Tau Community of Saint Francis.
4. The Headquarters of the Order are determined by the incumbent Abbot/Abbess.

## **XVIII. OBLATES AND ASSOCIATE COMPANIONS**

*For whoever is not against us is for us.*

*(Mark 9:40)*

1. An individual who supports The Founding Document of our Order and wishes to participate in the daily life of an individual House, without taking vows in the Order may become Associate Companions. They will either share in the life of the House as mutually determined by all parties involved, although s/he may not wear the habit or use the title Brother or Sister. Associate Companions may be invited by the Abbot/Abbess to the General Assembly and to the Days of Renewal as non-decision making guests.
2. An individual who chooses to embrace Lay Monastic life from their own homes, their monastery without walls, and who supports The Founding Document and who wish to attend their regular support groups at the monastery may become Oblates. They may be invited by the Abbot/Abbess to the General Assembly and to the Days of Renewal as non-decision making guests.
3. The acceptance of Oblates and Associate Companions is formalized by the Service of Acceptance. An updated list of Oblates and Associate Companions is kept in the Monastery, where a record will be kept.

## **XIX. RETREATS**

And from time to time he would withdraw to lonely places for prayer.  
(Luke 5:16)

1. In order to reaffirm our commitment to the religious life, all Companions of the Order are required to make a two day retreat annually. This retreat should be made away from the daily life setting so that distractions may be kept to a minimum.
2. During this time of exterior and interior silence, the Companion takes the opportunity to grow in the spiritual life. While on retreat, it is advised that The Founding Document be reviewed so that the Companion can reflect on its meaning in his/her own life. It is also recommended that a private reaffirmation of vows be made.
3. In the alternating years of the General Assembly, the Days of Renewal are held. This is a time when the Companions meet for community, recollection, and spiritual renewal.

## **XX. ANNUAL REPORT**

...they reported all that God had done through them and how God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.  
(Acts 14:27)

1. All novices and professed Companions are required to submit a written annual report to the Abbot/Abbess by the end of each January. This report should contain a summary of the novice's or Companion's life in religion, the status of ministry, and a projection of the up-coming year. This is a confidential communication between the Companion and the Abbot/Abbess.



## **XXI. CALENDAR OF CELEBRATIONS**

At your festivals, solemnities, or new-moon feasts, you will sound the trumpet at the time of your holocausts and your communion sacrifices, and they will call you to the remembrance of your God.  
(Numbers 10:10)

1. Since the Companions come from a variety of religious and cultural traditions, an all-inclusive calendar of feasts would be cumbersome to the Order as a whole. Therefore, the observance of special feast days is left up to the individual Companions and Houses; however, to show the unity of our celebration as a community, the following holidays are to be observed by all Companions of the Order:

January 1 <sup>st</sup>	Queenship of Mother Mary
January 6 <sup>th</sup>	Epiphany
January 18	Start of the Week of Christian Unity
February 1	Saint Bridget
February 2	World Day of Consecrated Life
March 19	St Patrick
April 22	World Environment Day
May 7	World Day of Prayer
June 29	Human Rights Day
Variable	Easter
Variable	Pentecost
July 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Saint Mary Magdalene
August 6	World Peace Day
September 29	Feast of the Archangels
October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Feast of the Guardian Angels
October 4 <sup>th</sup>	Feast of Saint Francis of Assisi and Animal Rights Day
November 1	Feast of All Saints
November 2	Feats of All Soul Day
December 8	Mother Mary Immaculate Conception
December 25	Christmas Day

2. The Abbott/Abbess will determine the dates for other religious interfaith holidays that should be observed by all with special activities such as private and common prayers, special meals and gatherings.



## XXII. STRUCTURE

*If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow in all ways into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength for each separate part to work according to its function.*

*So the body grows until it has built itself up in love.*

(Ephesians 4:15-16)

1. Our Order is dedicated to the spiritual growth of all creation and acknowledges the inherent value of all persons. We celebrate the special individual contribution each Companion makes to the Order and, therefore, we follow a collegial system of government.
2. Recognizing the need for structure, The Founding Document has been established to guide the spiritual affairs of the Order. Each Companion, with The Founding Document as the guide, is responsible for his/her own actions.
3. The General Assembly is our chief government and it guides the temporal affairs of the Order. It consists of all professed Companions (each of whom has equal voice), is called and chaired by the Abbot/Abbess, and meets every two years (more often if necessary). To call the General Assembly into session, the Abbot/Abbess will choose a location which is the most convenient for the majority of the Companions to attend without undue hardship. The Abbot/Abbess will solicit topics for discussion ninety days prior to the meeting and will communicate the agenda topics thirty days prior to the meeting. The Abbot/Abbess will publish the decisions of the General Assembly thirty days after adjournment.
4. The duties and responsibilities of the General Assembly are as follows:
  - To elect the Abbot/Abbess
  - To conduct official business of the Order
  - To make changes in The Founding Document as necessary
  - To review and act on agenda topics submitted by the professed Companions To protect the charism and heritage of the Order
5. We believe that God's Holy Spirit is present wherever two or more are gathered in Christ's name. We make our decisions based on the movement of God's spirit in our lives. In order to allow ourselves to recognize and follow God's design, we make our decisions by consensus. This process recognizes the Spirit's manifestation of the Divine Will thorough the unique ideas, feelings, perspectives and contributions of each Companion.
6. We unite ourselves by our common concerns and commitments and we act collegially in our community decisions. Harmony will exists in our Order when each Companion takes an active interest in the well-being of all.

## **XXIII. THE ABBOT/ABBESS**

You know that those who are supposed to rule over the *Gentiles* lord it over them and their great persons exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be the slave of all.

For the Son of Humanity came not to be served, but to serve...

(Mark 10: 42-45)

1. As every community has a leader, our Order designates the Abbot/Abbess as the leader of our religious community. We view this position not as the head of a body, but rather, as the center of a circle. The Abbot/Abbess is a person who has an openness to be energized by the mission of the Order and is inspired by the power to meet the needs of the Companions. His/her major task is to maintain the cohesiveness of the Order. The Abbot/Abbess has the prophetic function of challenging the Companions to a deeper living out of their religious commitments. The duties of the office are derived from The Founding Document, the authority from the Companions, and the respect from his/her own life based on the vows. His/her guidance of the Order comes from a shared common understanding of The Founding Document and not from personal, autocratic whim.
2. The Abbot/Abbess is elected every four years by the General Assembly. The Abbot/Abbess may serve no more than two consecutive terms, but may be re-elected to office, having been out of office for a minimum of one full term. S/he conducts all official business which affects the Order as a whole. S/he handles correspondence, applications for Companionship and vows, maintains the archives and the chronological account of the history of the Order, calls and chairs the General Assembly, receives the profession of vows of each Companion, and fulfills other duties as outlined in The Founding Document. S/he may act on behalf of all Companions in internal affairs as requested.
- 3 In our Order there are no "superiors" or "inferiors", only friends.

## XXIV. THE EXHORTATION

Brother and Sister Charitists,

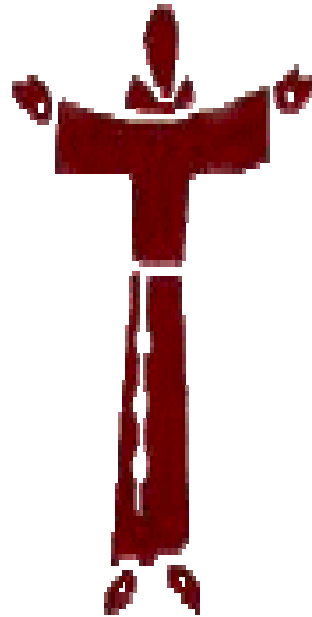
Herein is the key with which you will unlock the doors to many hearts. Use it well and cherish it always.

Guard your practice of the principles of The Founding Document and follow its precepts faithfully. With its assistance you will find spiritual renewal, consecration and transformation.

Let this Founding Document be our unity in our diversity.

Remember, everything fulfills its own destiny in its own time. Do not allow our Founding Document to turn to stone. Keep it always alive, for it is meant to assist with developing a fuller life. This is a living document. As your spiritual life deepens, so should your understanding and living of The Founding Document.

May peace, love and wisdom abide with us always!



# CEREMONIES



## **CEREMONY FOR THE WELCOMING OF A NEW POSTULANT**

*This service is conducted by the Abbot/Abbess (or designee) who is dressed in the habit and without liturgical vestments. Prior to the beginning of the service, the new postulant waits outside the room where the community has gathered. The senior-most Companion in vows assists the Abbot/Abbess.*

*The postulant knocks three times on the door. The assisting Companion goes to the door, opens it and says:*

**ASSISTING COMPANION:** What do you ask of us?

**POSTULANT:** I ask to be admitted as a postulant to the Foundation Program of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Community of Saint Francis.

**ASSISTING COMPANION:** Are you prepared to take this first step of your journey to discern you're calling to the religious life?

**POSTULANT:** I wish to try your way of life and I am willing to test my vocation by dedicating myself to the Kingdom and preparing myself to proceed further on this path.

**ASSISTING COMPANION:** We have heard your request and we welcome you to enter.

**The postulant enters the room where the community is gathered. S/he stands in the midst of those seated.**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** As a postulant you will need to give yourself as a gift of love. Place your life in the hands of God and allow God to do as God wishes so that you may fulfill what is good for you.

**READER 1:** Listen to the words of St. Iraneaus: "It is not you who shape God; it is God who shapes you. If then you are the work of God, await the hand of the artist who does all things in due season. Offer the potter your heart, soft and tractable, and keep the form in which the artist has fashioned you. Let your clay be moist, lest you grow hard and lose the imprint of the potter's fingers."

**ALL:** Gracious God, shape us anew, for we are fearfully, wonderfully made.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Now, as a community, we ask you to make certain promises which are bread for the journey. We ask you to speak of duty and faithfulness to the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Community of Saint Francis. We require that you go with us, for alone; no one can make the journey.

**POSTULANT:** With God's help and the assistance of this community, I promise: to learn your way of life as presented in The Founding Document; to live according to the five vows; to persevere in prayer; to serve God and humanity for the sake of the Kingdom; to be one with you in heart and mind; to live out the Gospel of Gods Holy Word every day; to communicate with the community regularly; and to discern my vocation with my preceptor and the Abbot/Abbess.

Teach me your rule of life; help me to learn to love the community; inspire me with your patience and understanding; support me with your prayers; strengthen me with your presence.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** We have heard your desire to follow God's call and to test your vocation within the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Community of Saint Francis. We will hold you in our hearts, desiring that our life in common may grow into a communion of love. The chief task of our Interfaith Order is to offer renewal, consecration and transformation of ourselves and creation. This can only happen through conversion.

**READER 2:** A conversion is the starting point of every spiritual journey. It involves a break with the life lived up to that point; it is a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom: **"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel."** (Mark 1:15). It presupposes also, and above all, that one decides to set out on a new path: **"Sell all that you have...and come, follow me."** (Luke 18:23). Without this second aspect, the break would lack the focus a fixed horizon provides and would ultimately be deprived of meaning.

Because of this second concept, a conversion is not something which is done once and for all. It entails a development, even a painful one that is not without uncertainties, doubts and temptations to turn back on the road that has been traveled.

On the other hand, the path of conversion is not one marked only by stumbling blocks; there is a growth in maturity. Throughout the Gospels, we are repeatedly told that, following some word or deed of Jesus, "his disciples believed in him." The point of this statement is not that, up to that point, they had no faith; rather, it is that their faith deepened with the passage of time. To believe in God is more than simply to profess God's existence; it is to enter into communion with God and - this second point being inseparable - with our fellow human beings as well.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** *N.*, this conversion we ask of you is to be receptive to God's voice and the voice of the community. It requires that you open deaf ears, soften a hard heart, concentrate a distracted mind, and deepen shallow

emotions, allowing the God's Love to take root in your heart and grow in you so that you may flourish in the work of the Kingdom.

**POSTULANT:** I ask God to bend what is rigid in me, relieve my confusion, and give me a wider, fresher vision.

**ALL:** Be strong and courageous, careful to observe the Great Commandment: remember it, speak of it, and obey it. Do not be fearful nor discouraged, for the love of God is with us wherever we may go.

**The postulant kneels before the Director General.**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Receive The Founding Document, the rule of life of this religious community. May you show with your whole life what you have faithfully learned.

**The Abbot/Abbess hands The Founding Document to the postulant.**

**ALL:** May Holy Wisdom hold you fast, guide you in your ways, and be your constant companion.

**The Abbot/Abbess now bestows on the postulant a symbol of this step in the Foundation Program.**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Wear this as a sign of our welcome to you. When you are clothed as a novice, you will replace this insignia with the habit of our Order.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Blessed are we, brothers and sisters of Jesus, for he showed us that our God is a passionate, loving friend, a God of relationships, deep affections and great trust, inviting us to intimacy and communion. As a sign of our unity in God, let us now join hands, welcoming our new postulant into our community. *N.*, come and join us, that you might embrace our world of love.

**(Here, the postulant goes to his/her place and joins hands with the others, forming a circle).**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** This circle represents the cohesiveness of our community. We do not wish it broken and recognize our duties to you as a postulant. As you have made promises to us, so too do we make promises to you.

**ALL:** When you feel lost or confused at the direction of your life, we are here for you;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When you feel you are journeying alone, we are traveling with you;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When you feel no one knows or understands, we are standing beside you;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When you struggle with fears and doubts, we struggle alongside you;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When you feel like running away, we send you strength in our prayers;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When your anxieties overwhelm you, we support you with our understanding;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me.

**ALL:** When you feel far from us, we are with you in spirit and love;

**POSTULANT:** I know your love sustains me. I am grateful to have each of you as a friend and as a guide as I journey on this pilgrimage.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Blessed are you, loving God. Your spirit binds us together in respect, dignity, love and service. Bless *N.* as we welcome him/her to the Foundation Program as a postulant, confident in your grace to transform this day's service into that which is profitable for your Kingdom. We eagerly await the day when the completion of studies will culminate in the profession of vows and a fuller share in the life of this Order.

**SIDE 1:** Lead us across the vast desert of uncertainty:

**SIDE 2:** Engender in us a holy and mutual love shared among us.

**SIDE 1:** Draw us together into one body;

**SIDE 2:** May we enjoy many more years of each other's companionship.

**SIDE 1:** Let us hear your voice calling each of us anew:

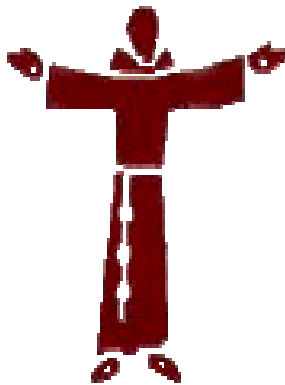
**SIDE 2:** Restoring our energies and willingness to work for the sake of the Kingdom with all our heart and all our strength.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:**

The spirit of the Lord rest upon us:  
the spirit of wisdom and understanding,  
the spirit of counsel and power,  
the spirit of knowledge and the love of the Lord;  
that we may delight in the Lord now and always.

**ALL:** Amen.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May peace, love and wisdom abide with us always!



## CEREMONY FOR THE CLOTHING OF A NOVICE

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by those who are entering the novitiate. At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*Prior to the ceremony, the Abbot/Abbess blesses the religious habit, cord and Tau cross for the new novice to wear before the proceedings begin.*

*The Abbot/Abbess (or designee), dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** I call N. to come forward.

*The postulant, dressed in the Franciscan habit and cord with one knot, comes forward and stands in front of the Abbot/Abbess.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** The Lord Jesus Christ, in his wisdom and love for all, has chosen you to be a sign of love within God's creation. What do you seek?

**POSTULANT:** I seek to try your way of life, and I am willing to be tested so that I may follow Christ and God's Prophets wholeheartedly in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Have you fulfilled the life of a postulant to the best of your ability, using it as a time of growth in love, wisdom and understanding of The Founding Document?

**POSTULANT:** I have.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Are you willing to be received as a novice in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

**POSTULANT:** I am.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Do you welcome this responsibility because you are determined to follow Jesus Christ, and all of God's Prophets to love your neighbor, and to work for the reconciling of the world to God?

**POSTULANT:** I do.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** As you enter the novitiate of our Order, do you promise to seek its guidance, to receive its support, and to communicate with it regularly through your Director of Novices?

**POSTULANT:** I do promise.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May God, who has begun this good work in you, bring it to fulfillment by your profession of vows in our Order.

**POSTULANT** (*kneels*): Drawn by my love of the Transcendent, I have come here to learn the way of religious life. Teach me to follow Christ and God's Prophets, to persevere in prayer, to serve others, and to live my life in accordance with The Founding Document and with the Companions of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis. Teach me to be one with you in heart and mind and to live out the Gospel of God's Love every day of my life.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** God inspires all holy desires and brings them to fulfillment. So may God guide you in the novitiate that you may, at its completion, with a faithful heart, profess your vows.

**The Abbot/Abbess hands the postulant the Franciscan Cross and says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** The Tau Cross is a symbol of our Unity as members of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis. It has been prayerfully inspired by love of our Founder Saint Francis to awaken our minds to the light, love and spiritual power available to us. May the wearing of this sacred symbol of the Tau Peace Cross invoke the power and protection of God into your life, uplift and stimulate your mind, and build a heart that can utilize God's graces in the unfolding of your soul. Be diligent in your prayer life, for it is the chief support of religious life.

~

*(The Book of the Holy Bible)*

*The Director General hands the postulant a book of the Bible and says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Receive at my hands this book of the Holy Bible. Be diligent in your study of this message so that you may be a faithful servant of the Kingdom of heaven. Be zealous in maintaining the truths of the Gospel so that peace may be fostered by speaking the truth in love.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Lord, you have inspired N. with the resolve to follow Christ and God's Prophets more closely. Grant a blessed ending to this journey on which s/he has set out, so that, by the profession of vows, s/he may be able to offer to you the perfect gift of his/her loving service.

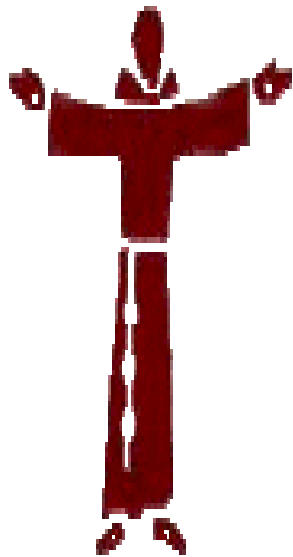
**NOVICE:** *Stands.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May God make you a witness and a sign of God's love for all creation.

**The Abbot/Abbess and the novice now embrace.**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May peace, love and wisdom abide with us always!

**The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.**



## CEREMONY FOR THE FIRST PROFESSION OF VOWS

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by those who are professing their vows. At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*The Abbot/Abbess (or designee), dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** I call N. to come forward.

*The novice, dressed in the Franciscan habit, comes forward and stands in front of the Abbess/Abbot.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** For \_\_\_\_ months now you have prepared yourself for this step in your spiritual journey. You have prayed, studied and looked deep into your soul. You have come to a fork in the road and now you must choose your direction. Stand fast in your commitment; surrender yourself and give of yourself. Remember always this life of service you have chosen.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** What do you seek?

**CANDIDATE:** Brother/Sister Director General, I seek to travel the spiritual path in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis. I seek to be a light to my brothers and sisters in the world. I seek renewal, consecration and transformation. I seek to serve all creation.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Are you now prepared to profess your vows and become a Companion of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

**CANDIDATE:** I am.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May the One Eternal Spirit be in your heart and on your lips.

~

### **The candidate takes the SEVEN VOWS:**

~

I profess the vow of Simplicity of Life as evidenced by the use of all goods to the betterment of creation; a life of simplicity and service; a reverence for our mother earth; a life based more on needs and less on desires; a wise use of resources without depriving others; according to The Founding Document and for one year.

~

I profess the vow of Purity of Heart, as evidenced by the transformation of my life by active love for others; the performing of the Works of Charity; the recognition of the Indwelling Light in all creation; an at-one-ment with all; ***(an exclusive, loving relationship with Jesus Christ in celibacy)***; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year.

~

I profess the vow of Obedience as evidenced by a sincere living of The Founding Document; an acceptance of co-responsibility for the Tau Franciscan Order; obedience to the decisions of the General Assembly; an active listening to my own inner authority; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year.

~

I profess the vow of Non-Violence as evidenced by working to resolve human conflicts with love and understanding; the renunciation of violence, force and war; working for the protection of our environment; the struggle with all peoples against oppression; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year.

~

I profess the vow of Universal Citizenship as evidenced by membership in the human community of the world; proclamation of the equality of all persons; respect for the beliefs and cultures of other peoples; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year

~

I profess the vow of Stability as evidenced by the lives of the cloistered followers of Saint Francis who sought refuge and spiritual strength from within the cloister, or confines of the monastery. The purpose of taking this vow is to remain at one within one's spiritual faith journey with one's God as an offering for global peace and the reconciliation of all faiths within God's family; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year.

~

I profess the vow of Providence as evidenced by membership of those who have been invited by God to embrace a community of faith where one's trust and faith in a God of Abundance is invited. The vow prohibits any member from asking for directing or indirect funding for their upkeep. This would be

contrary to the vision of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis; according to The Founding Document of our Order and for one year.

**The newly-professed now kneels before the Abbot/Abbess.**

**The Abbot/Abbess places a copy of The Founding Document in the hands of the professed while saying:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Herein you will find The Founding Document of our beloved Order. It is meant to be the key with which you will unlock the doors to many hearts. Use it well and cherish it always. Guard your practice of the principles of The Founding Document and follow its precepts faithfully. With its assistance you will find spiritual renewal, consecration and transformation. Let this Founding Document be our unity in our diversity.

*The Abbot/Abbess hands the professed the Franciscan cord with five knots to symbolize their commitment to embrace the Holy Vows and says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** This cord has been prayerfully inspired by love of our Lady, Quan Yin, Magdalene, Saint Francis and St. Claire to awaken our minds to the light, love and spiritual power available to us. May the wearing of the holy cord around your waist invoke the power of God into your life, uplift and stimulate your mind, and build a heart that can utilize God's graces in the unfolding of your soul. Be diligent in your prayer life, for it is the chief support of religious life.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** prepares to bless the scapular that will be worn by the junior professed monk.

**The junior professed monk now kneels before the Abbot/Abbess.**

*The Abbot/Abbess places the scapular over the shoulders of the professed to symbolize their commitment to embrace the Holy Vows*

**(The Holy Bible)**

**The Abbot/Abbess hands the professed a book of the Holy Bible and says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Receive at my hands this book of the Holy Bible which also include the Gospels of our Lord Jesus Christ. Be diligent in your study of this message so that you may be a faithful servant of the Kingdom of heaven. Be zealous in maintaining the truths of the Gospel so that peace may be fostered by speaking the truth in love.

**If a name in religion is to be taken, the Abbot/Abbess now says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Receive the name of \_\_\_\_\_ by which you will be known in religion. Let this symbolize your dedication as you become new in the spirit of your calling. May the Lord Jesus Christ put off from you the old person and deeds and clothe you with a new life, which is created by God in peace and with holiness. Arise from your former self and Christ shall give you light, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's.

**The newly-professed now stands.**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** The Lord God be with you.

**ALL:** And also with you.

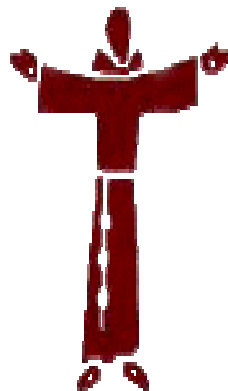
**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Let us pray. Almighty God, look with favor upon *N.*, who has professed his/her commitment to follow Christ and all your Prophets to serve in that name. Give him/her courage, patience, and vision, and strengthen him/her in his/her Interfaith vocation of witness to the world and of service to others. We ask this in the name of God who is our Loving Heavenly Father Mother God.

**ALL:** Amen.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Welcome, Brother/Sister *N.* as a Companion in our Order. May peace, love, and wisdom abide with you always.

**The Abbot/Abbess and the newly-professed now embrace.**

**The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.**



## CEREMONY FOR THE ANNUAL AND LIFE PROFESSION OF VOWS

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by those who are professing their vows. At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*The Abbot/Abbess (or designee), dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** I call N. to come forward.

**The Companion, dressed in the habit, comes forward and stands in front of the Abbot/Abbes.**

**ABBOT/ABBES:** For the past year (\_\_\_years) you have lived as a Companion in our Order. During that time, you have given your personal life as a channel of the transforming reality of God's presence in all creation. You have worked to bring about a climate conducive to transforming life into an existence of peace, love, freedom, and hope. What do you now seek?

**COMPANION:** Brother/Sister Director General, I seek to continue to travel the spiritual path in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis. I seek to be a light to my brothers and sisters in the world. I seek renewal, consecration and transformation. I seek to serve all creation.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Are you now prepared to *renew your vows/profess your life* as a Companion of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis?

**CANDIDATE:** I am.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** May the One Eternal Spirit be in your heart and on your lips.

**The Companion takes the Seven Vows:**

~

I profess the vow of Simplicity of Life as evidenced by the use of all goods to the betterment of creation; a life of simplicity and service; a reverence for our mother earth; a life based more on needs and less on desires; a wise use of resources without depriving others; according to The Founding Document and **for life.**

~

I profess the vow of Purity of Heart, as evidenced by the transformation of my life by active love for others; the performing of the Works of Charity; the

recognition of the Indwelling Light in all creation; an at-one-ment with all; (*an exclusive, loving relationship with Jesus Christ in celibacy*); according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

~

I profess the vow of Obedience as evidenced by a sincere living of The Founding Document; an acceptance of co-responsibility for the Order; obedience to the decisions of the General Assembly; an active listening to my own inner authority; according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

~

I profess the vow of Non-Violence as evidenced by working to resolve human conflicts with love and understanding; the renunciation of violence, force and war; working for the protection of our environment; the struggle with all peoples against oppression; according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

~

I profess the vow of Universal Citizenship as evidenced by membership in the human community of the world; proclamation of the equality of all persons; respect for the beliefs and cultures of other peoples; according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

~

I profess the vow of Stability as evidenced by the lives of the cloistered followers of Saint Francis who sought refuge and spiritual strength from within the cloister, or confines of the monastery. The purpose of taking this vow is to remain at one within one's spiritual faith journey with one's God as an offering for global peace and the reconciliation of all faiths within God's family; according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

~

I profess the vow of Providence as evidenced by membership of those who have been invited by God to embrace a community of faith where one's trust and faith in a God of Abundance is invited. The vow prohibits any member from asking for directing or indirect funding for their upkeep. This would be contrary to the vision of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis; according to The Founding Document of our Order and **for life**.

**If life vows have been professed, the Abbot/Abbess places the 'Consecrated Covenant ring on the Companion's finger and says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** This vow ring is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, signifying to all your total commitment to Jesus Christ, to the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis and to the Church of God. Being a circle, this ring is symbolic of eternity and, being of precious metal, is symbolic of the pure love which has already united your heart with that of our dear Lord. Wear this as a token of your fidelity in the vowed religious life.

**(If a name in religion is to be taken, the Companion kneels and the Abbot/Abbess says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Receive the name of \_\_\_\_\_ by which you will be known in religion. Let this symbolize your dedication as you become new in the spirit of your calling. May the Lord Jesus Christ put off from you the old person and deeds and clothe you with a new life which is created by God in peace and with holiness. Arise from your former self and Christ shall give you light, for you are Christ's and Christ is God's.)

**COMPANION:** *stands.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** My Brother/Sister, may peace, love and wisdom abide with you always.

**The Abbot/Abbess and the professed now embrace while the Abbot/Abbess says:**

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** I embrace you as my Brother/Sister and as my friend.

*The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.*



## **CEREMONY FOR THE INSTALLATION OF THE ABBESS /ABBOT**

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by the ABBOT/ ABBESS Elect. At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*The out-going ABBOT/ABBESS (or the senior-most Companion in vows if the incumbent has been re-elected), dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and says: I call N. to come forward.*

*The ABBOT/ABBESS-Elect comes forward and stands in front of the Officiant.*

**OFFICIANT:** You have been elected by your Companions at the \_\_\_\_\_ General Assembly to be the ABBOT/ ABBESS for the next four years. You are called to be the center of the circle, the one who maintains the cohesiveness of our Order. The duties of this office are derived from The Founding Document, the authority from the Companions, and the respect from your life based on the vows. Our Order is a community of faith, hope and love, transcending all barriers of time and space. This is the community you will lead, not only in the official structures, but also in its essential form of brotherhood and sisterhood. You are never alone in this work; profit from the knowledge and experience of the other Companions.

**OFFICIANT:** Do you promise to: Uphold the directions set forth in The Founding Document with understanding and reason?

**ABBOT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Work for the revelation of the inner Divine Light in all creation?

**ABBOTT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Respect the ecumenism of our Order?

**ABBOT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Promote the unity of the Companions?

**ABBOT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Foster the Works of Charity?

**ABBET/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Abide by the decisions of the General Assembly?

**ABBOT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise.

**OFFICIANT:** Lead not by edict, but by example and love?

**ABBOT/ABBESS -ELECT:** I do promise then kneels.

*The Officiant places both hands on the shoulders of the Abbot/Abbess -Elect and says:*

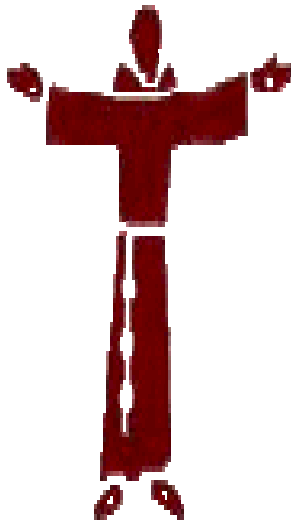
**OFFICIANT:** Receive the office of the Abbot/Abbess of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

*The newly-installed Abbot/Abbess stands and gives the final blessing:*

May peace, love and wisdom abide with us always.

**ALL:** Amen.

*The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.*



## **CEREMONY FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF AN OBLATE (living the monastic Life from their homes)**

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by those who are to be accepted.  
At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*The Director of Oblates and Associate Companions of the Order chosen to accept the Oblate, dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and begins the service.*

**LEADER:** There are different gifts.

**PEOPLE:** But it is the same Spirit who gives them.

**LEADER:** God works through different people in different ways.

**PEOPLE:** But it is the same God who achieves the purpose through them all.

**LEADER:** Each one is given a gift by the Spirit.

**PEOPLE:** To use it for the common good.

**LEADER:** Together, we are the body of Christ.

**PEOPLE:** And individually, members of Christ.

**LEADER:** Though we have different gifts, together we are a ministry of reconciliation led by the risen Christ. We work and pray to make the Church useful in the world, and we call men and women to faith so that, in the end, every person shall be reconciled to God. Within our common ministry, some members are chosen for a particular work and we recognize these special ministries, remembering that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life to set others free.

*An Oblate of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis comes forward, bringing the candidate, and says:*

**OBLATE:** Brother/Sister *N.* (*Leader's name*), speaking for the Companions of \_\_\_\_\_ House, a community of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis, I bring *N.* (*candidate's name*) to be accepted as an Oblate in our Order.

**LEADER:** *N.*, God has called you to serve Jesus Christ in a special way. You know who we are and what we believe and you understand the work which we all undertake for the sake of the Kingdom. Are you willing to be accepted as an Oblate in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis ?

**CANDIDATE:** I am.

**LEADER:** Do you welcome this responsibility because you are determined to follow Jesus Christ, reconciling the world to God through the Works of Charity?

**CANDIDATE:** I do.

**LEADER:** Will you serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love in union with The Founding Document and the Oblates of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis?

**CANDIDATE:** I will.

**LEADER:** Do we, members of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis, accept *N.* as an Oblate of our Order, chosen by God to share our life in religion?

**COMPANIONS:** We do.

**LEADER:** *N.*, we accept you as an Oblate in our Order and our House. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ, who has commissioned you. Live in Christ's love and serve Christ always.

**OBLATE:** Beloved God, you have chosen me; now grant me strength, wisdom and love to work for the Kingdom and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**LEADER:** Let us pray together:

**ALL:** O God, we praise you for calling us to be your co-workers for the sake of your Kingdom. We thank you for choosing to add to our number this brother/sister in faith. Together, may we live in your Spirit, and so love one another that we bring Christ's love to all of creation. Amen.

**LEADER:** Welcome to the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

*The Leader and the Oblate now embrace.*

*The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.*



## CEREMONY FOR THE ACCEPTANCE OF ASSOCIATE COMPANIONS

*The service leading up to this ceremony is determined by those who are to be accepted. At the designated time in the service, the following ceremony takes place.*

*The Director of Associate Companions of the Order chosen to accept the Associate Companion, dressed in the habit and appropriate liturgical vestments, stands and begins the service.*

**LEADER:** There are different gifts.

**PEOPLE:** But it is the same Spirit who gives them.

**LEADER:** God works through different people in different ways.

**PEOPLE:** But it is the same God who achieves the purpose through them all.

**LEADER:** Each one is given a gift by the Spirit.

**PEOPLE:** To use it for the common good.

**LEADER:** Together, we are the body of Christ.

**PEOPLE:** And individually, members of Christ.

**LEADER:** Though we have different gifts, together we are a ministry of reconciliation led by the risen Christ. We work and pray to make the Church useful in the world, and we call men and women to faith so that, in the end, every person shall be reconciled to God. Within our common ministry, some members are chosen for a particular work and we recognize these special ministries, remembering that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life to set others free.

*An Associate Companion of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis comes forward, bringing the candidate, and says:*

**ASSOCIATE COMPANION:** Brother/Sister *N.* (*Leader's name*), speaking for the Companions of \_\_\_\_\_ House, a community of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis, I bring *N.* (*candidate's name*) to be accepted as an ASSOCIATE COMPANION in our Order.

**LEADER:** *N.*, God has called you to serve Jesus Christ in a special way. You know who we are and what we believe and you understand the work which we all undertake for the sake of the Kingdom. Are you willing to be accepted as an Oblate in the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis?

**CANDIDATE:** I am.

**LEADER:** Do you welcome this responsibility because you are determined to follow Jesus Christ, reconciling the world to God through the Works of Charity?

**CANDIDATE:** I do.

**LEADER:** Will you serve the people with energy, intelligence, imagination and love in union with The Founding Document and the ASSOCIATE COMPANIONS of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis?

**CANDIDATE:** I will.

**LEADER:** Do we, members of the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis, accept *N.* as an Associate Companion of our Order, chosen by God to share our life in religion?

**COMPANIONS:** We do.

**LEADER:** *N.*, we accept you as an Associate Companion in our Order and our House. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ, who has commissioned you. Live in Christ's love and serve Christ always.

**OBLATE:** Beloved God, you have chosen me; now grant me strength, wisdom and love to work for the Kingdom and the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**LEADER:** Let us pray together:

**ALL:** O God, we praise you for calling us to be your co-workers for the sake of your Kingdom. We thank you for choosing to add to our number this brother/sister in faith. Together, may we live in your Spirit, and so love one another that we bring Christ's love to all of creation. Amen.

**LEADER:** Welcome to the Tau Interfaith Franciscans Order of Saint Francis.

*The Leader and the Associate Companion now embrace.*

*The service is concluded in an appropriate manner in accord with the entire liturgical service.*



## CEREMONY FOR THE COMMISSIONING OF MINISTRIES

*This service is conducted by the Abbot/Abbess (or designee) who is dressed in the habit and without liturgical vestments. Prior to the beginning of the service, each Companion has placed a symbol of his/her ministry near the Abbot/Abbess. The senior-most Companion in vows may assist the Abbot/Abbess.*

*The Abbot/Abbess, sitting in the midst of the community, begins the service.*

**ABBESS/ABBOT:** May the Lord, who went about doing good, be with you.

**ALL:** And also with you.

**READER 1:** There are different gifts,

**ALL:** But it is the same Spirit who gives them.

**READER 1:** There are different ways of serving the Lord,

**ALL:** But it is the same Lord who is served.

**READER 1:** God works through different people in different ways,

**ALL:** But it is the same God who achieves the purpose through them all.

**READER 1:** Each person is given a gift by the Spirit,

**ALL:** To use it for the common good.

**READER 1:** Together we are the body of Christ,

**ALL:** And individually, members of Christ.

**READER 1:** If one part of the body suffers,

**ALL:** All the other parts suffer with it.

**READER 1:** If one part is praised,

**ALL:** All the other parts share its happiness.

**READER 1:** All of us are Christ's body,

**ALL:** And each one is a part of it.

**READER 1:** Just as the Son of Humanity came not to be served, but to serve,

**ALL:** We come to work for the Kingdom of heaven.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Let us show ourselves to be God's servants in the world through the Holy Spirit; by purity, knowledge, patience and kindness, by our genuine love, by our message of truth, and by the power of God.

**READER 2:** The Founding Document III

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Commissioning is the act whereby our Order recognizes the diverse gifts of its members and celebrates the particular ministry of each Companion in the life of the Order and in the various settings in the life of the world. Within our Order, each Companion is chosen for a particular work. We recognize these special callings, remembering what Jesus, our model, said:

**"Whoever among you wishes to be great must become the servant of all, and if you wish to be first, you must be the slave of all."**

Let us fix our eyes upon Jesus, the source of our faith.

**READER 3:** Matthew 25: 34-40

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Spirit of Power, time and again throughout history you have anointed your servants and sent them on mission; to speak your word to the poor, to heal the sick, to free captives. Come, Spirit of the Living One, and bless this oil of anointing (*the oil is here blessed*). Make it an oil of gladness and healing, a lotion of strength and tenderness. We pray that by this anointing, our hands and hearts may be strengthened for the work that lies ahead.

*The Abbot/Abbess calls each Companion individually:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Brother/Sister N., servant of God, I invite you to come forward as a sign of your acceptance of the call to work in this commissioned ministry.

*The Companion comes and kneels before the Abbot/Abbess.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Are you persuaded that God has called you to the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_?

**COMPANION:** I am.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Are you ready, with the help of God and the support of your Companions, to work in your ministry for the sake of the Kingdom of God?

**COMPANION:** I am.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Do you pledge your personal and collective life as a channel of the transforming reality of God's presence in all creation?

**COMPANION:** I do.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Will you attempt to be pastorally creative, flexible and mobile, depending upon the needs to be met?

**COMPANION:** I will.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Will you, by your work of love, strive to bring about a climate conducive to transforming life into an existence of peace, love, freedom and hope?

**COMPANION:** I will.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Will you perform your work with compassion and empathy, always aware of the interdependence of all living things?

**COMPANION:** I will, for it is the holy omnipresence of God in all creation, the Christ, which animates us.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** God, we thank you for the calling of Brother/Sister *N.* to work in your Kingdom. We commission him/her for the ministry of \_\_\_\_\_ to which you have called him/her. Guide, inspire and empower him/her and keep him/her faithful to the charism of our Order, so that all s/he does may be done for the sake of the Kingdom.

*The Abbot/Abbess hands the Companion the symbol of his/her particular ministry while saying:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** In the name of God and of this community, I commission you, Brother/Sister *N.*, as \_\_\_\_\_ and I give you this symbol of your ministry.

*The Abbot/Abbess anoints the hands of the Companion and then says:*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. Receive the Holy Spirit." Go in the name of Christ.

**ALL:** In the name of Jesus Christ, and on our behalf, we declare you to be commissioned. Go forth in the Lord's service!

*The Companion returns to his/her place. The service continues with each Companion being commissioned.*

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** O Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

**ALL:** Where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as  
to console;  
to be understood, as to understand;  
to be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

**READER 4:** Luke 17: 7-10

**ALL:** May our work be a shimmering mirror of your handiwork;  
in the excellence of its execution;  
in the joy of doing it for its own sake;  
in the poverty of ownership over it;  
in the openness to failure or success;  
in the invitation to others to share in it;  
in its bearing much fruit for the Kingdom.

**ABBOT/ABBESS:** We ask your blessing as we work for the sake of the  
Kingdom.

Let us go out in peace  
and be very courageous,  
holding on to what is good,  
not returning evil for evil,  
strengthening the faint-hearted,  
supporting the weak,  
helping the afflicted,  
honoring all people,  
loving and serving the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit;  
and may the blessing of God be with us always.

**ALL:** Let us strive for understanding,  
listen for wisdom,  
agree with one another,  
live in peace,  
and may the God of peace be with us always.

*The service is here concluded.*

**TAU COMMUNITY OF SAINT FRANCIS**  
**TAU COMMUNITY FRANCISCAN ORDER OF UNIVERSALUS**  
**MONASTICS (TCFOUM)**



*A Modern Spiritual Lay Monastic Interfaith Franciscan Community for  
a New World*

*"We are not human beings having a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings  
having a human experience."*

***Pierre Teilhard de Chardin***

*You don't have to live in a monastery, convent or temple to be a modern spiritual  
contemplative!*

**The FRANCISCAN ORDER OF UNIVERSALUS MONASTICS, (FOUM) a  
radically inclusive non-residential community of women and men, was founded to:**

- 1. Provide a supportive, accepting, and affirming environment for individuals who  
are committed to a universal approach to Interfaith Franciscan Spirituality,  
encompassing all faiths and all traditions, and who wish to express their spirituality  
in an interfaith tradition without dogma.*
- 2. Provide service and good works to the community-at-large, especially those who  
are disenfranchised and marginalized.*
- 3. Promote the healing of the human experience in which each person may realize  
his or her unique wholeness.*

*The Tau Community of Franciscan Universalus Monks dedicate themselves to let  
compassion for all sentient beings, human and non-human.*

*Franciscan Universalus Monks come from all walks of life and may be single,  
married, partnered, celibate or non-celibate, students, working or retired, and may  
or may not be able to make a "full time" commitment to the Order.*

*The Order also does not discriminate in relation to age although individuals must  
be an adult (at least 18) to join.*

**What is required?**

As a member of the Order, you have the support of others who are sharing this path  
with you. In this connection, you are able to generate a field of loving compassion that

unifies us as human beings As monks, male or female, affirm simplicity of life and our role as earthen vessels for the Universal Spirit.

**1. Individual daily meditation**

We accomplish a sense of loving compassion through inner awareness by meditative practices.

**2. Individual daily prayer**

Members of the order are encouraged to recite daily the shortened version of Morning and Evening Prayer (Lecta Divina). The Virtual Monastery of Saint Francis now provides members the opportunity to join the community for prayer each day.

**3. Collective meditation and reflection**

Coming together for shared meditation and reflection is part of our communal life. Designated periods of communal meditation will be scheduled and all monks of the Order are encouraged to attend.

**4. Awareness of, and respect for, the rituals of all faiths**

Members of the Order are encouraged to plan and implement Interfaith spiritual ceremonies for the edification of the other monks and the community-at-large. It is important, too, that members maintain their own faith (if any) and follow their own religious practices.

**5. Willingness to teach**

Your particular spiritual journey and/or faith practice has implications for all of us. It is important that we all be teachers and learners for each other. We wish to learn what your individual experience has taught you, so that your experience can teach us.

**6. Willingness to agree to group consciousness**

Our belief is that the “Universal Wisdom” instructs us through group consciousness. We agree to discuss together our efforts and activities as an Order and make many of our decisions based on this Universal group consciousness.

**7. Commitment to honesty and integrity**

As members of the Order we agree to always be honest with ourselves and each other, and to act with integrity in all of our actions.

**8. Commitment to playfulness, humor and joyfulness**

We recognize and accept our imperfections and those of others, and also realize at a deeper level we are children of the Universe and are here to enjoy the world, even in the midst of our own pain and chaos, and that pain that is evident in the world at large. We strive for lightness and live in the moment with Joy.

If you are interested in joining the Order as a monk, or have questions, please email [virtualmonastery@aol.com](mailto:virtualmonastery@aol.com)

*Because we believe that we are all children of the same Universe, we support one another on our individual spiritual journeys and show the reality of universal love and compassion to all beings. Whatever our religious background, we all share a fondness for the teachings and the being of Francis of Assisi his simplicity; his desire for the non-materialistic life and his love of animals and nature.*

*All are welcome to join us in our commitment.*

**We have Four degrees of involvement in the Franciscan Order.**

1. **Lay persons.** *Many individuals may just wish to attend our educational events, teachings, and inter-spiritual (Interfaith) activities as lay persons. All are welcome.*

2. **Spiritual Affiliates** *take the Resonance Vow (see below) and are committed to a contemplative life, meditation, and to the Order. Spiritual Affiliates may live anywhere in the world and communicate with us via the Internet. Spiritual Affiliates in the local area are welcome to join us for our inter-spiritual events and to assist us with planning and development. If you do not live in the South Lakes of Cumbria area, we invite you to join us online as a Spiritual Affiliate of the Order.*

3. **Lay Franciscan Monastics** *also take the Resonance Vow, dedicate themselves to the Order, and are considered Monks of the Order*

4. **Ordained Franciscan Ministers** - *having completed their 3 years seminary training are commissioned for Divine service as ordained monastics by taking vows which also include the Resonance Vow, dedicate themselves to the Order, and are considered ordained Ministers- Monks of the Order*

*The Order does not require that individual monks live in a monastic residence. Monks are free to live wherever they choose, as many may have marital/partner/family obligations, etc. Some monks may choose to share living space and create an Order House.*

*The Monk may elect to wear the traditional monastic robe of the Tau Community of Franciscan Universalus Order (pale blue and navy denim) while in the company of one-another and when serving the community-at-large in their role as a monastic member of the Order, but wearing the robe is not required at any time.*

*Those members who work in traditional work setting roles freely elect to either wear the robe or not at their personal discretion. The robe is a symbolic manifestation of our commitment to simplicity of spirit, contemplation, and truth as we know it.*

*If you feel you are called to dedicate yourself to the Universal Spirit and desire to discuss joining the Order as a Monastic, Please contact us at: [virtualmonastery@aol.com](mailto:virtualmonastery@aol.com)*

*Please view the (TCFOUM) Resonance Vow below this page.*

**TAU COMMUNITY FRANCISCAN ORDER OF UNIVERSALUS  
MONASTICS (TCFOUM)**

**Resonance Agreement between \_\_\_\_\_  
and the TAU COMMUNITY FRANCISCAN ORDER OF UNIVERSALUS  
MONASTICS , (TCFOUM)**

**Developing harmony and spiritual attunement in a diverse group context**

As a Tau Community Franciscan Universalus Monk, you are entering into a shared or group spirituality, that is not based on ideological agreement or "believing in the same things" (because in many cases, we do not) -- but in adopting a spiritual attitude or "posture" that tends to open individual people to the presence or awareness of divine energy. Based on our experience, we sense that this approach can lead individuals into attunement with their own spiritual nature, and, when adopted by a group, can lead to a shared or group attunement.

**Co-creativity and the future**

It is our belief that the best ideas for our shared and collective human future should and can emerge from a "co-creative" process that brings every interested person into a collaborative process that is led forward by divine experience and grace. Can and should spirituality be a contributing factor and source of guidance, as world civilization moves forward into a new global century? We believe that the answer should be "yes", and we are looking for wise and graceful ways to make this possible.

**Resonance**

After years of study and experience, one central idea regarding collective spirituality is becoming clearer. We call this idea "resonance", and its essential idea is an energetic connection between people that emerges and becomes strong when spiritual attunement is in focus.

The experience of resonance within a group is amplified and strengthened when members of the group are sensitive to one another, and follow a practice of "sacred listening". As Interfaith Franciscan Universalus Monks, we are creating **"Resonance Agreement"** between one another, asking all Monks to agree with the principles. As our Order expands, we will be exploring ways to introduce this agreement into the world as a fundamental basis for community development and creating peace in the world.

The Resonance Agreement is composed of ideas taken from the spiritual teachings of the world, and expressed in the form of a particular point or principle.

You are invited to propose new principles or practices available to everyone. Please note this is NOT an agreement to obey any earthly authority figure in regards to your spiritual path.

**The Resonance Agreement:**

In the context of my spiritual relationship with other individuals both within the Tau Community of the Franciscan Universalus Order and outside the Order:

:

1.  To insure that I am sensitive to what is actually said, I agree to listen without judgment.
2.  I will respect the Universal presence in other people even if I disagree with their ideas.

3.  I will listen in silence and speak in a non judgmental way.
4.  I agree that all seemingly divergent paths finally lead to The Ultimate Spirit.
5.  I will seek and experience the Universal Presence and energy in other people.
6.  I agree to honor silence and time for reflection.
7.  Universal Love requires nothing in return. I pledge the Universal Love in me for the Universal Being in you.
8.  I agree to ignore social status. Everyone is an equal partner in the discussion.
9.  I will ask clarifying questions if I do not understand.
10.  I will seek to know the Universal Will for me, and surrender to it.
11.  (Hindu Namaste) The Universal Presence in me honors the Universal Presence in you, and we are one.
12.  The Spirit in me is one with the Spirit in you.
13.  I agree to speak from my own personal experience (gnosis) and not merely of what I have read or been told.
14.  I will listen to understand, not necessarily to agree with or believe.
15.  I agree to be honest, truthful and open, within the limits of confidentiality and discretion.
16.  I agree to honor confidentiality. What is told to me in confidence will remain private.
17.  I agree to spend time in daily meditation, and collective meditation when possible, to create resonance within myself.

I wished to be called Brother or Sister \_\_\_\_\_,

**TCFOUM**

My signature implies I have committed myself to the Resonance agreement of the Tau Community Franciscan Universalus Monks

\_\_\_\_\_ Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Founder, or Mother Abbess:

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ **TCFOUM**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**T**he Tau Interfaith Franciscan Community of Saint Francis is an  
unincorporated charity of the UK

Uniting all Faith Groups as ONE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY through Love,  
Prayer and Service



**The Founding Document**  
**First Revision**  
July 2009

**Second Revision**  
November 2010