

CREATIVE ADAPTATIONS

Our mission statement says that *“the guidelines are not intended to impose burdensome requirements... .”* We would like to consider the following three possible obstacles to implementing the suggested curriculum: (1) A community has one formation director, with people in the aspirancy, in initial formation, and in temporary promises. The difficulties here involve people, space, and schedule. (2) An established community with a system in place that has served them for years may be resistant to the guidelines because they do not want to change. (3) A formation director who is overwhelmed by the task of implementing the guidelines.

There is a simple solution to all three of these possibilities: *Carefully adapt the guidelines to your own circumstances, while maintaining their fundamental elements.* How? The formation director, led by the Holy Spirit and in response to the grace of the office, should take the lead in proposing priorities to the Council of the community. This may present an opportunity to engage the community by brainstorming together, and proposing different models to develop. (Come prepared with easel pad and markers!) Note the advantages and disadvantages inherent in each model, but realize that no single model will be perfect. And don't be afraid to introduce changes on an experimental basis. No program, no matter how good, is likely to serve the community permanently.

We have listed some creative adaptations for your consideration:

- Meet every month during the year, even if certain portions of the meeting must be omitted occasionally
- Have ceremonies only once a year
- Teach in blocks of material that can be covered in any order (rotation)
- Use teams of formators, not just the formation director
- Schedule entry into the community to coincide with the beginning of a block of material
- Meet for an entire day
- Assign more work to be done outside the meeting
- Give “summer assignments” for any month in which there is no meeting
- Eliminate the practice of skipping a meeting during the month of the community retreat
- Plan an additional retreat day for particular focus
- Have a “family meeting” to celebrate Carmelite feasts, timed to coincide with community ceremonies
- Have an optional second meeting for specialized purposes
- Evaluate location; look into another or additional space
- Stagger meeting times, but make sure aspirants attend the full community meeting
- Offer evening classes
- Groom upcoming formation directors through team teaching

One community that lacked the resources to break into separate formation classes spends all of their meeting time together, and the specific formation for each level is done

at the candidate's own speed through outside reading, with open-ended question assignments and regular meetings with the Director of Formation. This model for a formation program presents a creative solution to the problem, while simultaneously developing the candidate's capacity for silence, solitude, and personal responsibility.

Remember these two principles: (1) Necessity is the mother of invention; and (2) Working out a creative solution is an important part of community building and drives us to prayer.

