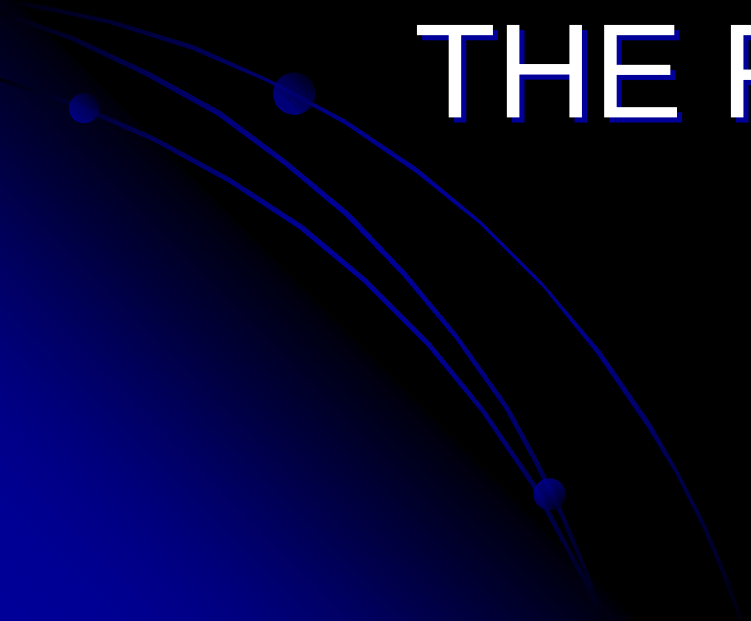
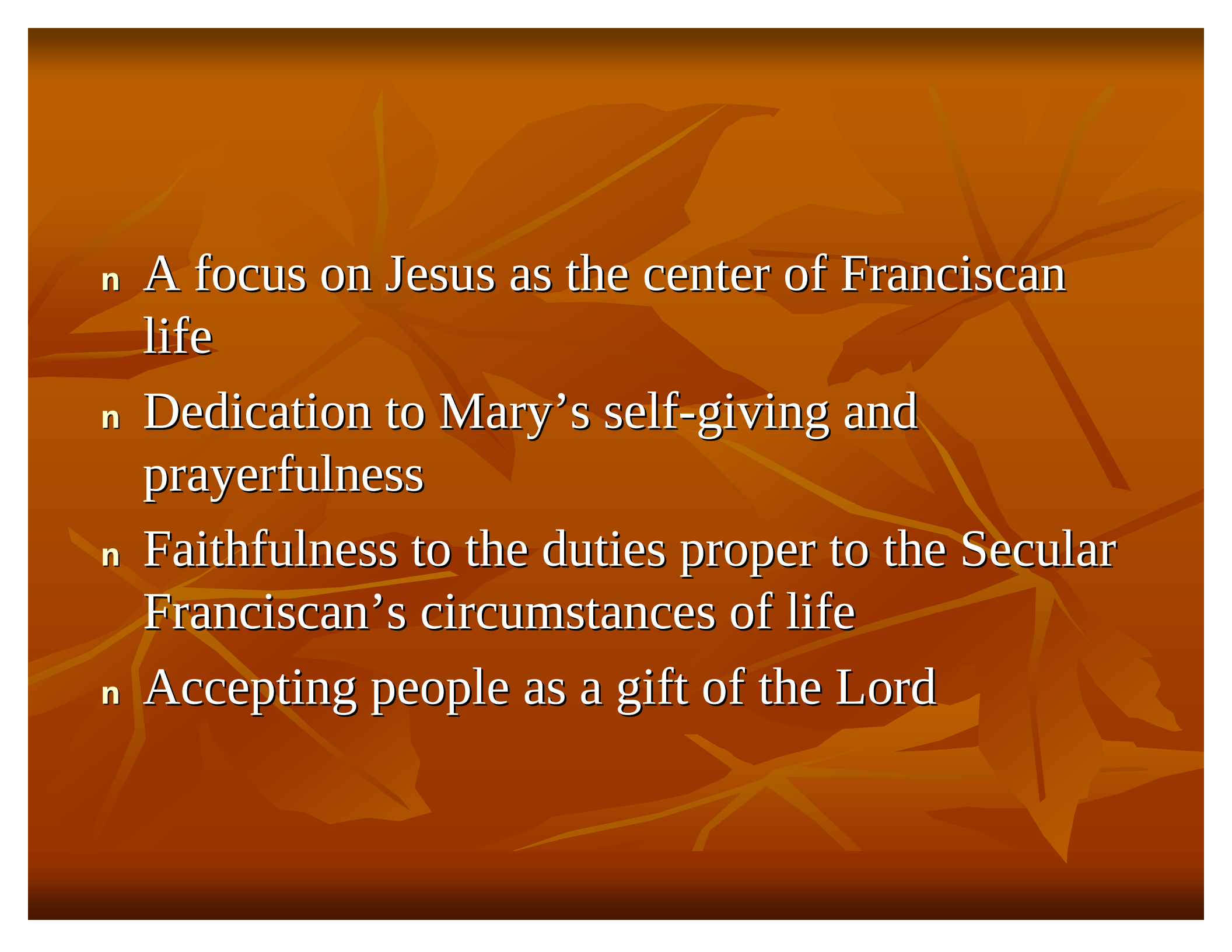
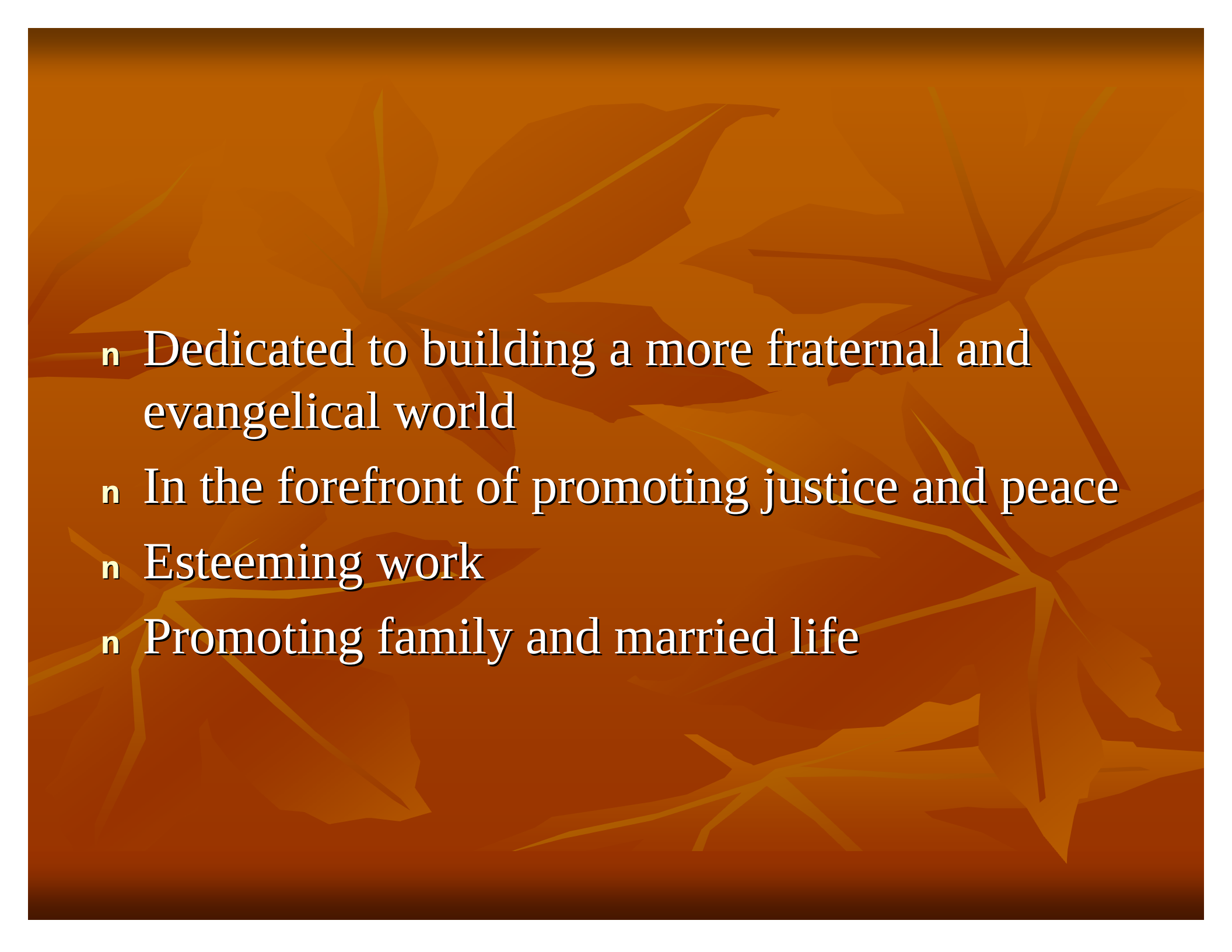


WHAT IS A SPIRITUAL
ASSISTANT ?

THE FRANCISCAN
VISION



- 
- n A focus on Jesus as the center of Franciscan life
 - n Dedication to Mary's self-giving and prayerfulness
 - n Faithfulness to the duties proper to the Secular Franciscan's circumstances of life
 - n Accepting people as a gift of the Lord

- 
- n Dedicated to building a more fraternal and evangelical world
 - n In the forefront of promoting justice and peace
 - n Esteeming work
 - n Promoting family and married life

- 
- n Respecting all of creation and avoiding exploitation of creation
 - n Encouraging members to be ready to serve the fraternity, in offices or any way needed
 - n Understanding and encouraging a financial “fair share” for supporting higher councils

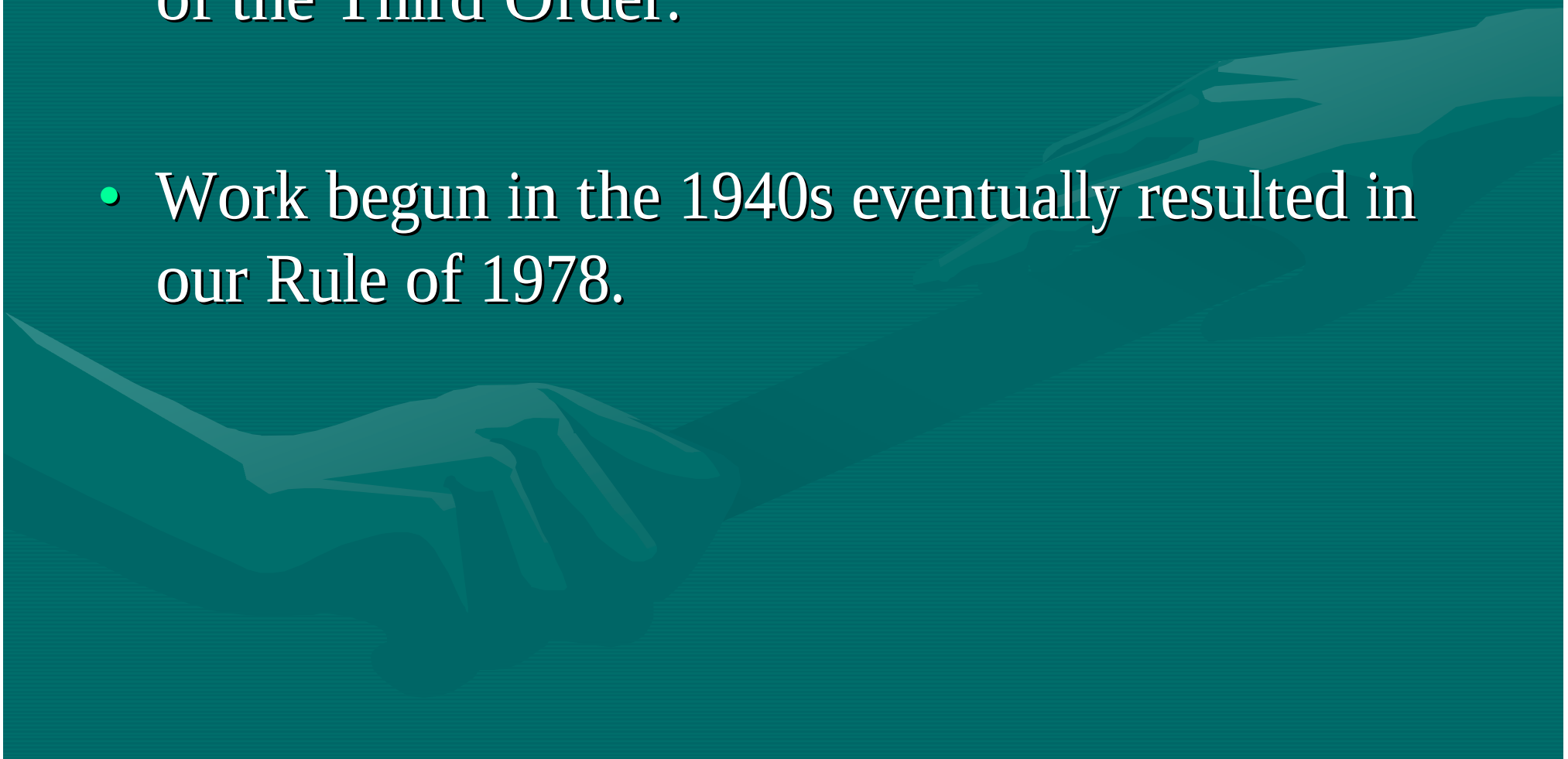
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUAL ASSISTANTS AND THE FRATERNITY

- In 20th century, SFOs came to rely on friar spiritual assistants for everything.
- Fraternities become “devotional societies” instead of schools of Gospel life.

What A Spiritual Assistant Is Not

- Not a “director”
- Not a “leader”
- Not in charge of all spiritual teaching
- Not the secretary or treasurer
- Not an “in absentia” spiritual assistant

- Pius XII, a tertiary, started program of renewal of the Third Order.
- Work begun in the 1940s eventually resulted in our Rule of 1978.



- What is the Secular Franciscan Order?

Autonomous

One Order

United

Secular

- Not an appendage to First Order/T.O.R

- Councils to ask for a “suitable and well-prepared” person as a spiritual assistant

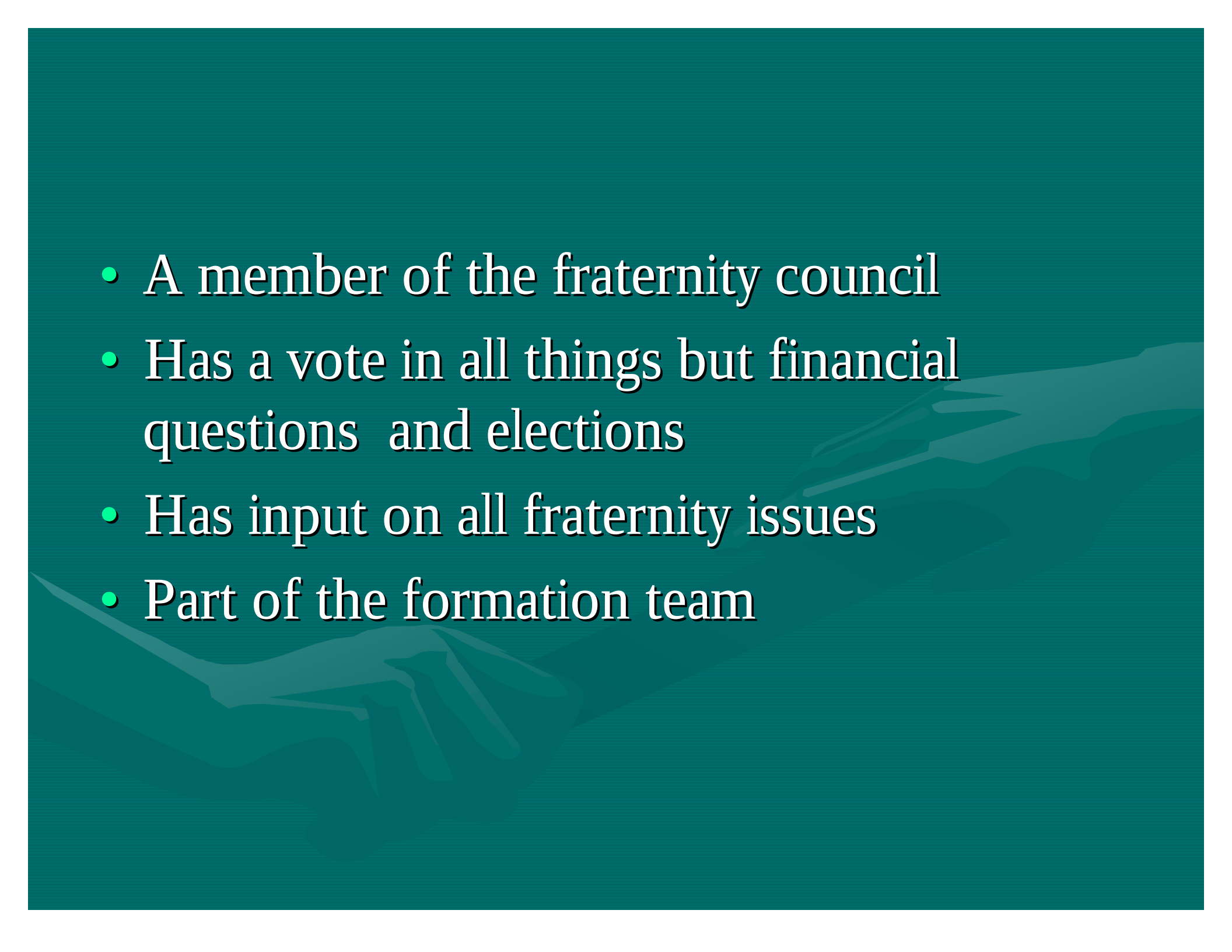
Requires someone who knows the history of the SFO.

Requires constant interaction with fraternity council.

- Keep in mind the “VISION.”

- Peacemaker
- Mediator
- Model of Gospel life

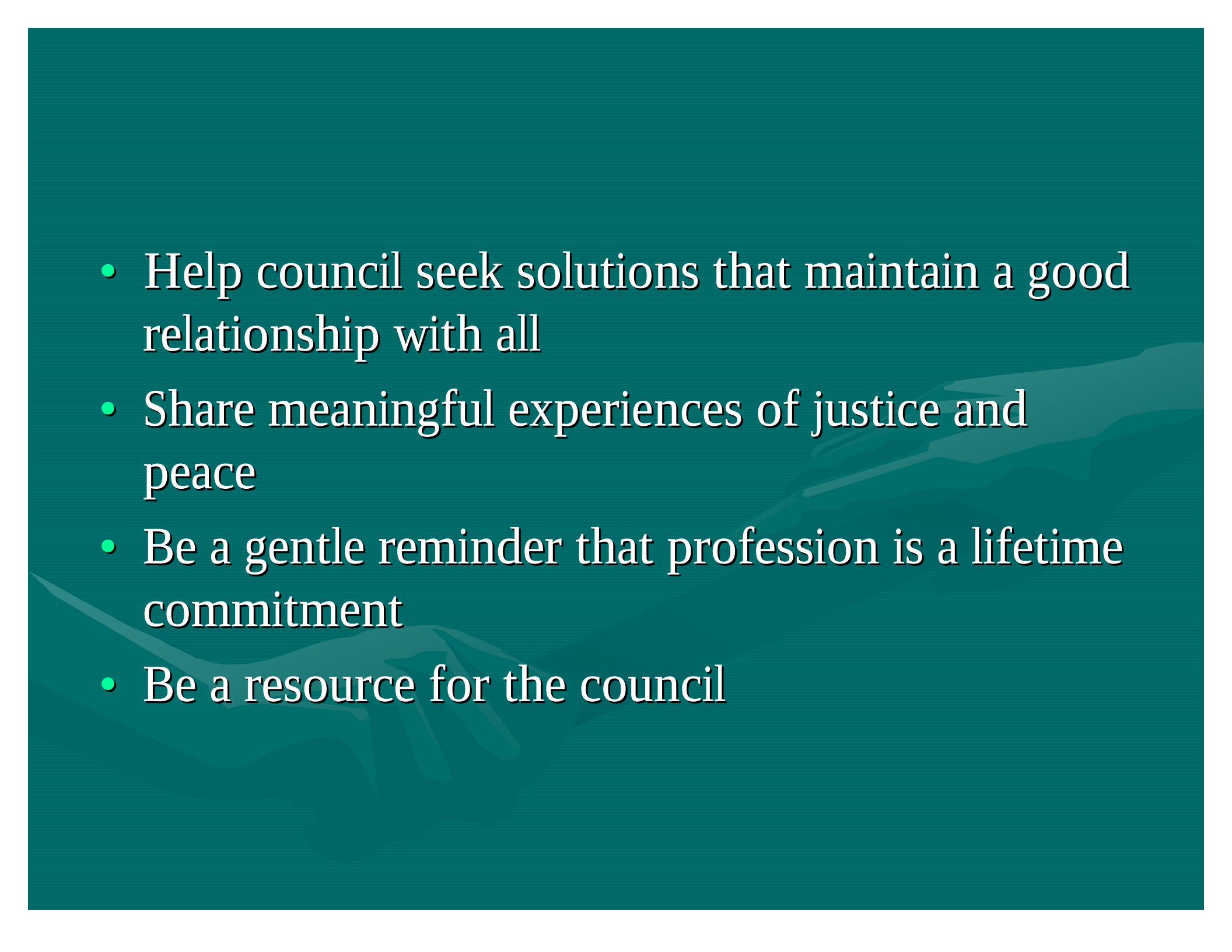


- 
- A member of the fraternity council
 - Has a vote in all things but financial questions and elections
 - Has input on all fraternity issues
 - Part of the formation team

- As elected council members are servant leaders, so also are spiritual assistants servant leaders.
- S.A. works with councils to give life to our common Franciscan vision
- Proclaims the Franciscan spirit by word, action, prayer and example
- Spiritual assistants share their gifts for the good of the SFO and the Franciscan family

WHAT COUNCILS NEED

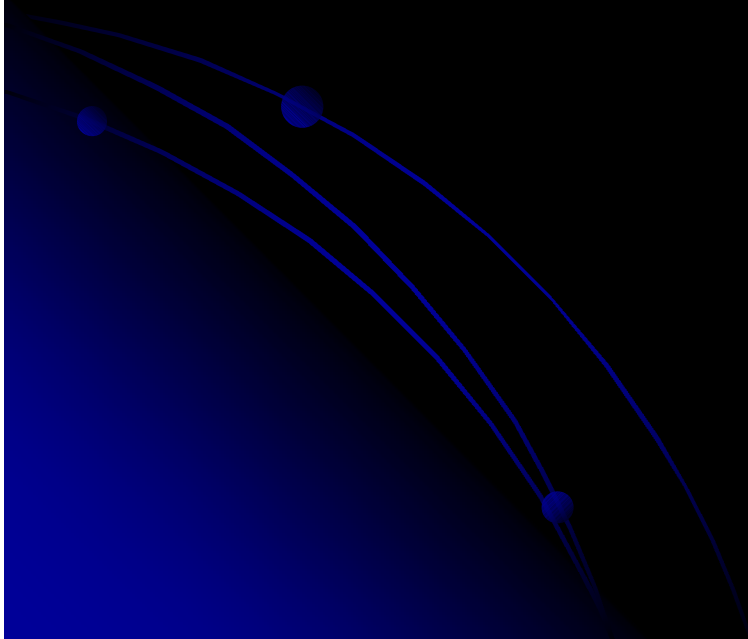
- Guidance to help them remain true to the Franciscan charism
- Assist council in preparing future leaders
- Help all the leaders be true animators of the fraternity
- Explore with council members the way the SFO can properly live their secular Franciscan form of life
- Vote on acceptance of candidates for profession

- 
- Help council seek solutions that maintain a good relationship with all
 - Share meaningful experiences of justice and peace
 - Be a gentle reminder that profession is a lifetime commitment
 - Be a resource for the council

- Help council understand the principle of subsidiarity and their own responsibilities
- Encourage council to set up meaningful relationships with their elderly and sick members unable to attend meetings.
- Guide them in the Franciscan way of dealing with those who absent themselves regularly.

- Be aware of the necessity of proper balance between the vision and the structure
- Encourage councils to be creative in resolving difficulties
- Be a skillful listener
- Help the fraternity vary its prayer forms if they are having trouble in that regard

HELPING IN FORMATION



- n S.A. works in collaboration with the fraternity's formation director
- n Councils need ongoing formation, not just fraternities
- n Helps all to remember and more thoroughly understand their profession
- n Be present at all council meetings.

- n Along with all of the council, helps form and train future leaders.
- n Continual training and updating by all.
- n All should have a sense of belonging to a world-wide Order and to a large Franciscan family.
- n Remind all of the need for daily conversion.

- n Help leaders experience secularity.
- n Leaders are animators – of their fraternity and of the world in which they live
- n S.A. strives to help leaders revive the evangelical spirit in themselves and their members

- n Helps council and fraternity to remember that prayer and action are partners, but must be kept in balance
- n Be present, as all council members should be from time to time, at initial formation sessions
- n Discernment necessary at all stages of the journey.

n Help council and formation team remember that formation must be:

Active

Communal

Ecclesial

Secular

Joyful

Open-ended

Centered on Jesus Christ and His Gospel

In a spirit of simplicity & humility

- n Remind council and formation team to check documents of those in initial formation
- n Formation requires an interchange between the formation team and those in formation.
- n Help determine if the material in initial formation is influencing the way those receiving it live their lives

- n Assist team and those in initial formation to evaluate the influence of Vatican II and its documents
- n Don't diminish the fact that the Franciscan way of life is a demanding way
- n Emphasize the God-given human dignity of every individual, noting the need for honest self-knowledge

- n Encourage all to remember that their priorities must be in favor of the SFO
- n Discernment in all things is continually needed and formation must emphasize this.

EXPECTATIONS OF A SFO COUNCIL

- The word “assistant” means to stand beside, to be present, to help.
- Our Rule says spiritual assistance consists of:
 - (1) being a witness of Franciscan spirituality, and
 - (2) collaborating in formation.



- A spiritual assistant is called because of his or her competence to help the council.
- Role of S.A. must be seen in his or her “assisting.”
- A S.A. can provide moments of reflection, or Days of Recollection, or other spiritual reflections.



- The S.A. has a better overall view of the fraternity, and can watch that it doesn't close in on itself.
- Assistant is partly pastor, guide and teacher, but only in a helping way.
- S.A needs to know all the members.
- Can help encourage service by all members.



 Pastoral assistance in a visitation.

Can evaluate balance of times
given to various actions;

Can evaluate the apostolates of
the fraternity;

Can help keep alive the spirit of
evangelization



SUMMARY

 Spiritual Assistant at any level should foster communion with the Church, bear witness to Franciscan spirituality, co-operate and collaborate in formation, and help nourish the Christian life of the community

▪
» THE END



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Set 1

- n 1. How does the description you have heard of a spiritual assistant's role differ from the ideas you have held?
- n 2. If you have a spiritual assistant, does it appear that he/she properly understands their role? If not, how will you explain it to them?
- n 3. If your fraternity does not have a spiritual assistant, how do you think a spiritual assistant could help your fraternity?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS Set 2

- n 1. If your fraternity has a spiritual assistant, what does he or she do (1) in your council meetings and (2) in your fraternity meetings?
- n 2. How can you improve the formation program in your fraternity and how could a spiritual assistant help do that?
- n 3. How can a spiritual assistant help your members better understand and live their profession?