

## Stages of membership

**Aspirant** – The person is seriously inquiring about membership. This may involve the exchange of e-mails and a phone conversation. The need at this stage is to determine if there is likely to be a fit between the Order and the person. It's a first look. For example, if the person seems to really be seeking a monastic life we would refer them to other communities. If the person has no likelihood of having a setting in which to do parish development work we would assume this is not a fit. If there are areas of the person's history that raise concerns that would need to be explored. We may suggest that the person engage in some activities appropriate to the next two stages as a way for the person and the Order to gain more clarity.

**In discernment** - This is a period that is at least 5 months long. It takes place prior to the first taking of the Promise. See - <http://www.orderoftheascension.org/membership/> It can also be a much longer period of time due to the person's life circumstances but would usually not be longer than two years. In some cases it will make sense for the person to begin aspects of the formation process.

**Novice** –The person takes the Promise for a first time and is clothed with the cassock of the Order. This happens during the annual retreat of the Order. This is a three-year period prior to taking the Promise a second time (with life-long intention). It can be extended. We assume the novice will complete the formation process during the three years. This may be extended into a fourth or fifth year. The novice is part of the OA community, has voice but not vote at chapter. The novice wears the cassock of the Order but not the Cross (to be given when taking the Promise a second time). The novice identifies with the Order by placing OA after his or her name in signatures, stationary, web sites, etc. Wearing the cassock and using “OA” are forms of clothing ourselves in the life of the Order.

**Professed Member (OA)** – Upon taking the Promise a second time (which is taken with a life-long intention) the member receives the Cross and has voice and vote in Chapter.

In practice there is likely to be an overlap of activities between the first three stages.

March 2018

