



The Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters, Inc. Sister 411

A long, long time ago, let's say 1976, in a place very far away (Cedar Rapids, Iowa), a convent of Roman Catholic nuns lent some retired habits to a group of men performing their version of The Sound of Music. Three years later, those habits resurfaced in the streets of San Francisco's Castro district...

On Easter Weekend 1979, during the time of the "Castro Clone," three men went out into the streets to challenge the world. They went in full, traditional habits through the streets of San Fran and down to the nude beach. One even carried a machine gun and smoked a cigar. They were met with shock and amazement, but captured everyone's interest. Their next appearance was at a softball game where their pompon routine all but stole the show and by the time the Castro Street Fair had rolled around, they were ready to recruit more. In the fall of 1979, **Sister Hysterectoria** and **Reverend Mother** went to the first International Faerie gathering and encountered even more men with the calling.

1980 brought the new Order, and the name Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. **Sister Hysterectoria** designed the first habits after a Flemish 14th century ladies-in-waiting and French cloister's wimple, and through a city grant, commissioned the first set of habits and "Ear Brassieres." **Sister Secuba**, a calligrapher, created the logo and the original banner under which the Sisters made their first public appearance.

After the San Francisco Order was founded, the mission of the Sisters — to promulgate universal joy, expiate stigmatic guilt and serve the community — spread far and wide. Houses can be found across the United States and in several countries around the world. Although the San Francisco House is often referred to as the "Mother House", the Sisters have no central seat of power and no single ruling body. Each House is an autonomous, unique group with its own Habits, culture and rules. Just as the San Francisco House is a reflection of the culture that surrounds it, so too is each House a reflection of its own environment. These Houses operate as mostly non-profit charity organizations, raising money for AIDS/HIV organizations, LGBT-related causes, and mainstream community service organizations. The promotion of safer sex practices are also a mainstay of most of the Houses

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The Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters are an order of 21st century nuns dedicated to the manifestation of cosmic joy through freedom of expression, charitable acts, community outreach, and social activism. The Sisters were founded in 2009 by **Sister Gunza Blazin**, **Sister Ivana Pocahotass**, **Sister Sara Belle Ballsy**, **Sister Anita Mandablough**, and **Sister Rapture Divine Cocks**

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MEMBERSHIP

Membership dues are \$50 per year. The Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters is a democratic Order, and but we do have leadership, officers, and four levels of membership. The process of progression through those levels is listed below:

ASPIRANTS: Aspirancy begins when you declare your intent to join at one of our general membership meetings. It lasts for at least three months during which you should be developing relationships your fellow Sisters, participating in our events and watching how we work and operate.

You'll need to talk with the Mistresses of Novices, and they will assess your motivations for wishing to join the Order and will try to determine if you will be a good fit. Remember, desire isn't enough to be a Sister and it truly isn't for everyone. An Aspirant is just beginning of your journey. This is a period to give you an idea of the time, energy, and emotional commitment being a Sister requires.

Aspirants are considered members but have no voting rights, cannot be an Officer, or Chair a Committee. You are neither allowed to wear any Sister garb, nor speak for the Sisters in anyway. You must attend at least 3 general membership meetings and participate in at least 3 Sister events be it accompanying the Sisters during a manifestation or helping out with an event. Once you have met these requirements, the General Membership (GM) will vote on your request to elevate to Postulant. If a majority of the GM votes to elevate you, you will become a Postulant.

POSTULANTS (Sisters and Guards): Postulants are just beginning their journey to becoming a Sister. Postulants are divided into two types: Postulant Sisters and Postulant Guards.

Both types of Postulants are under the keep of the Mistresses of Novices for approximately 3 months. As a postulant, the Mistresses of Novices will assign a fully professed member (FPM) to be your Big Sister

During this time, postulants will spend time working with their Big Sister learning what FSS Sugarbaker Sisters do and how to be a Sister. Postulants will receive training on attire, behavior, and safety. Also during this time, all postulants must attend at least one safer sex training at a local AIDS/HIV outreach agency such as Positive Impact.

A Postulant Sister wears the Black Robe with the **grey** veil. The Hood signifies the weight of the path you have chosen. Postulant guard must wear black at all times. Postulant Sisters must wear white face and paint their eyes, BUT may not wear color on their lips and faces. This symbolic that postulant are there to watch, to learn. The lack of lips signifies that postulants cannot speak for FSS.

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A Postulant Guard is not required to wear makeup but if a guard should desire to manifest they must wear black at all times and may wear white face, but no color (not even black) on their faces, eyes, or lips. This is to signify that Guards are there to scare the shit out of people and to protect the Sisters.

All Postulants are required to attend all GM meetings and training sessions as set forth by the Mistresses of Novices, or contact one of them in advance to explain why they cannot attend. They must attend at least 3 events of FSS, wearing the uniform of a Postulant. They are not allowed to appear in public in the uniform of a Postulant without being accompanied by a Fully Professed Sister. They may not speak on behalf of FSS to the press or the public. They need to develop relationships with the other FPMs. They are considered members but have no voting rights, cannot be an Officer, or Chair a Committee. They may participate in the General Business Meetings, but cannot make motions, or vote on any motions. Postulants should keep in mind the reason for not having lips. They should concentrate on watching and listening even when not in face. Postulants must keep track of their activities and present a resume of activities to the Mistresses of Novices upon completion of the minimum requirements for elevation. This is also the time when a Postulant must develop their biography. Their biography will tell the story of the who they are as a Sister or Guard.

With the approval of the Mistresses of Novices and the Big Sister, when the Postulant is ready for elevation, the Mistresses of Novices will present the Postulants resume to the GM at the next GM meeting, or through an online meeting. The Postulant must choose which path they will follow in their Novitiate; Guard or Sister. If a Postulant chooses to follow the path of a Guard, then they should also find a Fully Professed Guard to act as a mentor. FSS must approve the Postulant's advancement to Novitiate by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the GM. If the Postulant's advancement is accepted by the GM, then the Postulant must then take the vow to uphold the FSS Mission Statement before advancing to Novice.

NOVICES: There are 2 types of Novice Members, Novice Sister and Novice Guard. Both types of Novices will take what they have learned as a Postulant and build on it towards their journey to becoming an FPM. The Novitiate lasts a minimum of 6 months.

Novices Sisters may fully manifest in white face including coloring on face and lips, may only wear black robes and a **white** veil.

In recognition of individuals who have shown a desire to be part of FSS on an ongoing basis, but do not wish to become Nuns, FSS has created the category of Guard. The primary way a FP Guard participates with FSS is by escorting and ensuring the safety of the Sisters as well as assisting with events. Guards may manifest in white face but can only add **black** as an additional color.

All Novices is required to attend all GM meetings or contact one of the Mistresses of Novices to explain why they can't attend. They are encouraged to participate at the meetings but have no voting rights. They must participate in a minimum of 6 of FSS's events as a Novice. A

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Novice cannot appear in public without being accompanied by an FPM. They may not speak on behalf of FSS to the press or the public. They cannot run for office or chair a committee. Their Big Sister or Big Brother to help guide them in their journey to becoming an FPM. They are expected to be well versed with all training instruments of FSS, including the bylaws and these policy and procedures, as well as the Sistory of The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Upon meeting the requirements for advancement, the Novice must provide the Mistresses of Novices a resume of activities to date. With the approval of the Mistress of Novices and the Mother, she may recommend to the GM an interview and a vote to advance the Novice to FPM. The Novice must receive three-fourths (3/4) vote to be elevated to FPM.

Novice Sister: When the Novice Sister is ready to put all she has learned to the test she must plan, organize, and execute her Novice Project, after a recommended two (2) months into the Novitiate. With the help of the rest of FSS, the Novice will present their project idea to the Mistresses of Novices for approval. During a Novice's project, she IS the point nun for that event and expected to act as such.

Novice Guard: Novice Guards will receive training from their Big Brother on what their role is in FSS. Novice Guards are the escorts and guardians of FSS. When the Novice Guard is ready to put all he has learned to the test he must plan, organize, and execute their Novice Project, after a recommended two (2) months into the Novitiate. With the help of the rest of FSS, the Novice will present their project idea to the Mistresses of Novices for approval. During a Novice's project, the Novice Guard IS the point guard for that event and expected to act as such.

FULLY PROFESSED MEMBERS: There are 2 types of Fully Professed Members, Sister and Guard.

Fully Professed Sister: Elevating to Fully Professed Sister brings on BIG changes. A Fully Professed Sister will graduate from her white habit and veil to a full wimple and black veil. Before advancing; however, all Novices must take their full vows. After taking his/her vows, the FP Sister is free to express her unique expression and artistic style. Wearing the white face and House coronet of a Sister, she may express herself through her clothes and accessories. A FP Sister will utilize all she has learned during her journey. She is now able to represent FSS to the press and the public. She can now take on a leadership role. She can hold office, chair a committee, and become a mentor to others beginning their journey. The FPM participates in the direction MCS takes. She has a right to conduct business and vote at all GM Meetings in which she is in good standing.

Fully Professed Guard: The primary way a FP Guard participates with FSS is by escorting and ensuring the safety of the Sisters as well as assisting with events. Guards must also take their on vows to uphold the mission of the FSS. Guards may wear white and black make up with one (1) other color if they choose. They must dress all in black and are encouraged to dress for events in theme specific attire. A Guard has the right to vote at GM meetings in which they are in good standing except on votes of progression. A Guard may also assist a Sister or other fully professed Guard with mentoring a Novice Guard on their journey. Guards may not

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represent FSS to the press or the public. They may not hold office or mistress positions but may chair a committee. They may serve as a Member at Large on the Board of Directors.

Transition from Guard to Sister: Fully Professed Guard Members wanting to transition to Sister within MCS will be required to adhere to the following convention:

- i. Complete a Novitiate of approximately three (3) to six (6) months where they assume the title and appearance of "Novice Sister" of FSS. A Novice project is encouraged but not required.
- ii. Select a Sponsor (FPM Sister in good standing) within FSS at the approval of the Mistress of Novices.
- iii. They may not represent FSS to the press or public.
- iv. They retain existing voting rights but may not vote on progressions.
- v. They pay dues as defined by the board.
- vi. They may not serve as officers of the board or in mistress positions but may continue to chair a committee or serve on the board if they held the position at the time of declaration.
- vii. The GM may define other rights and/or restrictions as necessary.

THE LOOK

The Habit: A nun is identified in part by the unique clothing she wears. This is called the "habit" and it has a few basic parts: the wimple (head piece on which rests your veil); the robe (which goes over your body); the scapular (a piece of cloth running down the front and back of the body); and the bib (a collar that fits above the robe and scapular). Concerning the wimple, each House designs its own unique wimple.

The Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters permit Postulants to wear only gray veils until they have elevated to Novices. Once elevated, Novices may only wear white veils until they have become fully professed Sisters. This is a sign that as a Novice you are still learning and developing. Colored or black veils are worn by sisters who have completed their full-profession.

Typically, Sisters use a variation of this design as their "formal habit" for important rituals and functions. The Sugarbaker Sisters require all newly veiled Novices to wear only this formal habit for a specified period of time. More information about the basic look of a Sister can be found in the document, NUN FACTOR.

Festive wear is another distinct form of sister clothing and typically include the wimple and veil

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and then any variation of fun gender bending drag that makes you feel fabulous.

White Face: The wearing of white face is a unique signature of Orders in the United States. It is not an obligation, and several Orders in England and Australia have chosen to not wear white face. The Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters do wear white-face, but only Postulants, Novices, and Fully Professed Sisters may do so. Guards may wear white face if they choose to do so. The history of wearing white-face is not based in a desire to hide one's face or identify, but is more a way to channel energy and amplify impact. Some see it as just a way to have fun, some Sisters connect white face with the spiritual work helping them to bring more magic into the world. Whatever the reason you decide, you should think of white face as an extension of your sisterhood. Make your own look and by all means have fun with it!

Additional Information:

The information provided above just scratches the surface of who the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and what they do to bring excitement and magic into the world. We recommend that as part of your journey to sisterhood, you spend time researching more on the Sisters. We have listed below just a few links where you can find even more information.

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (San Francisco): The Mother House of us all
<http://www.thesisters.org/index.html>

Flaming Sugarbaker Sisters Yahoo Group and Facebook Pages:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/flamingsugarbakersatlanta/>

“Habits, Heels, and Ear Brassieres Come with a Surprising Spirituality” a great article recently posted in the SF Weekly Times

http://blogs.sfweekly.com/shookdown/2009/03/habits_heels_and_ear_braziers.php

YouTube: a wealth of information on the Sisters. Just do a basic search and you will find dozens of videos.