

Lady Poverty Region Ongoing Formation

Live the Treasure! Celebrating 40 Years of Our Rule!

Article 1

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God -- laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.

In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

*..., (Francis) founded a **true Order**, that of the Tertiaries, not restricted by religious vows, as the two preceding (Orders), but similarly conformed to simplicity of customs and to a spirit of penitence. So, he was the first to conceive and happily carry out, with the help of God, what no founder of regulars (religious Orders) had previously contrived, to have the religious life practiced by all.*

~ Benedict XV, Encyclical "Sacra Propediem" January 6, 1921

The Third Order was born in the mind of your Seraphic Father the day that a group of souls, moved and urged on by his words, asked him to be allowed to accompany him on the path he was traveling, following in the footsteps of Christ, in Whose name he was constantly repeating the words "Be ye perfect " (Matt. 5, 48). But since it was not possible for everyone to follow the Gospel counsels, Francis remembered that all, as long as they wished it, could tend to the perfection of their own state of life and reach it without embracing the state of perfection. By denying themselves, all could be docile instruments in the hands of Christ: prompt to answer His every desire, His every suggestion. And that complete and continual clinging to the will of God, that affectionate yet strong dedication to Him and to His wishes, that fullness and perfection of life in the light of the Gospel, can belong to all Christians, and in fact has been the treasure of so many in every age. The Third Order of St. Francis was born to satisfy this thirst for heroism among those who though having to remain in the world did not wish to be of the world. The Third Order, then, seeks souls who long for Perfection in their own state.

~ Pius XII, Allocution to Tertiaries July 1, 1956

Our Franciscanism is not just a private affair nor merely a personal road to sanctity. It is more than one's belonging to an organization that assures spiritual benefits in an easily obtainable way. Rather, our Franciscan way of life is a precious gift and an involving mission. By committing ourselves to the gospel of Jesus through observing the OFS rule of life, we become a living sacrifice of praise and thanks, and a vibrant witness of the Good News for all to see and hear.

~ Benet A. Fonk, OFM, *Called to Proclaim Christ: Short Reflections on the SFO Rule*

Questions for meditation and discussion

1. In what ways is your local fraternity a "spiritual family"?
2. As a member of the Secular Franciscan Order, what are some of the blessings you experience by belonging to a fraternity?
3. The Secular Franciscan order is "one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church." What are some of the things that differentiate us from the other spiritual families?

At the microphone: What are 3 ways "to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi"?