

Secular Franciscan Order -Charism / Mission

Brothers and Sisters of Penance and lay Catholics for nearly 800 years have made a life commitment and become members of what is called the Secular Franciscan Order ('secular' meaning that we are embedded in world').

Number of Secular Franciscans.

- 15,000 U.S.
- 400,000 Worldwide

Ecumenical:

Episcopalians formed the Third Order Society of St. Francis in 1950, and other Christians have joined the Franciscan movement since then including Lutheran and Ecumenical congregations. (*Secular Franciscans can often be recognized by the Tau Cross they wear.*)

Many have come before us (all walks of life):

The Secular Franciscans commit themselves to live the Gospel according to Franciscan spirituality in their secular condition.

Lay Franciscans have made a mark on history along with many amazing sisters and friars. A list of lay Franciscan women and men that include Dante, St. Thomas More, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, St. John Paul 23rd, Charles Borromeo, Joan of Arc, venerable Matt Talbot

Franciscan spirituality

Francis's spirituality was simply *bringing life to the Gospel and the Gospel to life.."*

A spirit of continual and radical conversion. It is a vocation. A Calling.

Does being "secular" mean we are consecrated who just don't live in a religious community?

- It means much more! It means we seek to live IN fraternal union with ALL people in the world around us. Our vocation is found in our everyday life as singles, married, business people, charitable work, and worldwide community.
 - Secular Franciscans should consider their own family to be the first place in which to live their Christian commitment and Franciscan vocation.
 - Married couples find in the Rule of the OFS an effective aid in their own journey of Christian life, aware that in the sacrament of matrimony their love shares in the love that Christ has for his Church. The beauty and the strength of the human love of the spouses is a profound witness for their own family, the Church, and the world.
 - Daily work is not only the means of livelihood, but the opportunity to serve God and neighbor
 - Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, affects interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.

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As a summary of the elements of Franciscan spirituality, a Franciscan should live:

- in communion with Christ poor and crucified,
 - Pope Pius XII stated in 1956:*There is also a Franciscan way of contemplating Jesus: the meeting of uncreated Love with created love. Similarly, there is a method of loving Him and of imitating Him: in reality it sees the Man-God, and prefers to consider Him in His holy Humanity, because this reveals Him more clearly and, as it were, allows Him to be touched. From this arises a burning devotion to the Incarnation and the Passion of Jesus, because these (mysteries) allow us to see Him, not so much in His glory, in His omnipotent grandeur, or in His eternal triumph, as rather in His human love – so tender in the manger, so sorrowful on the cross.*
- in the love of God,
- in brother/sisterhood with all people and all of creation,
- participating in the life and mission of the Church,
- in continual **conversion** and **transformation**,
- in a life of prayer – liturgical, personal, communal (reading the Gospel, **devotion to the Eucharist**)
- as instruments of **peace**.
 - Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society. The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

Are Secular Franciscans still relevant today?

- Turmoil in the Church (evangelical mission)
- Attracting today's Youth (Simplicity, finding meaning, social Justice, attraction of St. Francis)
- Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of creation (environmental justice, St Francis; Patron of Ecology) –
 - *The mission is to make daily choices made in the areas of justice, peacemaking and respect for all created things and people;*
 - They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others. They promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to create worthy conditions of life for all and to work for the freedom of all people.
 - towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities.

Summary: Refer the Franciscan Calling handout

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Additional Notes from the OFS Rule:

Gospel to Life

OFS Rule: Article 4

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.

Proclaiming Christ

OFS Rule: Article 5 & 6

- Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity.
- Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.”

The Soul of the Secular

OFS Rule: Article 8:

“So let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. Let them participate in the sacramental life of the church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.”

[The secular rule goes on to suggest: We can find silence and solitude in an interior way in community, in the rhythm of the Churches Prayers and calendar, in our private space and time and certainly before the blessed sacrament

A Proper Spirit of Detachment

OFS Rule: Article 11

- “Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs.
- Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

A Fraternal and Evangelical World

OFS Rule: Rule 13 & 14

- A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ
- Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.

Love of Creation

OFS Rule: Article 18

Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.