



Forming the Formators Workshop
A Presentation for Formation Teams

SECULAR FRANCISCAN IDENTITY

INTRODUCTION

- Here to discuss article entitled Our Identity as a Secular Franciscan by Anne Mulqueen, OFS (further referred to as 'OISF').
- Main points plus additional commentary (not a summary - please read the article).
- All the (FUN) topics are 'foundational' and geared for initial formation.
- Throughout the manual you will see 'glimpses of our identity' discussed in every topic.

OUR GOAL

The Inquirer or Candidate should begin to reflect on our identity in terms of

- our **SECULAR** nature
- our **FRANCISCAN** charism
- and the significance of an **ORDER**.

These three ‘dimensions’ are integral to our identity and are used as the basis for exploring who we are in this FUN/OISF article.

THE SECULAR DIMENSION

‘St. Francis brought the practice of gospel life out of the monasteries into the world of the family and society.’

(OISF pg.6)

THE SECULAR DIMENSION

‘To consider our lives and our actions either sacred or secular is to create an unnatural duality in our lives. Secular life is sacred when we offer the work of our hands and the desire of our hearts to the Lord.’

(OISF pg 6)

THE SECULAR DIMENSION

This is our domain-

‘They should bear witness to this faith before all, in their’:

- family life
- work
- joys and sufferings
- associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father
- presence and participation in the life of society
- fraternal relationships with all creatures

(see OFS Const. Article 12.1)

THE SECULAR DIMENSION

Our 'secular' state of life is meant to be holy and sacred.

- witness 'this form of life' to the world
- propose 'this form of life' to others
- share the fruits of 'this form of life' with all (especially those most in need)

a spiritual harvest in our lives...

'producing worthy fruits of penance'.

THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

We belong to a
spiritual family.

We are one branch
of this family.

Our emphasis is
conversion

Franciscan Family

First Order

*OFM,
OFM Conv.
OFM Cap.*

Minority

Second
Order

*Poor Clares
OSF*

Poverty

Third Order
(Regular,
Secular)

*TOR,
OFS*

Conversion

THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

“The term Penance in Franciscanism is equivalent to the biblical meaning of metanoia, understood as an intimate conversion of the heart to God, as a vital attitude, a continuous state of being. It is not a question of doing penance but of being penitent.”

*Fr. Temperini, TOR
(OISF pg 10)*

THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

The cornerstone or emphasis of the Secular Franciscan identity is a life devoted to transformation—a life radically changed through repentance—a life that leads to the likeness of Christ.

(OISF pg 10)

THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

Our identity of Franciscan Penitents begins shortly after St. Francis was given *the gift of penance* by the Lord and became a penitent himself. Quoting from his *Testament*, Francis says:

'The Lord granted me, Brother Francis to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body: and thereafter I lingered a little and left the world'. (Testament, paragraph 1)

(OISF pg. 8)

THE FRANCISCAN DIMENSION

St. Francis exhorts the **Brothers and Sisters of Penance** (see *Prologue to OFS Rule*).

He identifies them (us) as, '*All who*'...

- *love God totally*
- *love our neighbor as ourselves*
- *hate our sinful tendencies*
- *receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ*
- *and produce worthy fruits of penance*

THE ORDER DIMENSION

Essential elements contained in Article 2 of the Rule.

- a movement led by the Spirit
- organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world
- members strive for perfect charity in their secular state.
- profess to live the gospel in the manner of St. Francis

THE ORDER DIMENSION

St. John Paul II remarked:

“This ancient term ‘Order’ means nothing more than your intimate belonging to the large Franciscan family. The word ‘Order’ means the participation in the discipline and actual austerity of that spirituality, while remaining in the autonomy typical of your lay and secular condition...”

(speech to delegates at 1988 General Chapter)

THE ORDER DIMENSION

This part of our identity speaks of:

- a fraternal journey (koinonia) and belonging
- a well established plan of life centered on the person and the following of Jesus
- striving for Christian and Franciscan perfection together
- vocation, gifts, opportunities and responsibilities
- being evangelized in order to evangelize
- rebuilding the Church
- promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- and much more.

THE ORDER DIMENSION

Important questions need to be asked:

Candidate:

“What significance will ‘belonging to an Order’ have in my life?” ...

Fraternity:

Will inquirers and candidates experience the fraternity as the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members?

THE ORDER DIMENSION

‘the spirituality of the Tau’



The external sign of identity for the Secular Franciscan is the TAU. St. Francis highly regarded and honored this sign, this biblical symbol of conversion and salvation.

(Ez. 9:4 ...and the LORD said to him: Pass through the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and mark the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the abominations practiced within it.)

THE ORDER DIMENSION

Duc in Altum! – Look to the future and set out into the deep!

The Church expects from the Secular Franciscan Order, one and only, a great service in the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unity on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as a “community of love”. The Church expects from you, Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God.

St. John Paul II exhortation to Secular Franciscans;
(Nov. 22, 2002)

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Fr. Solanus Casey Region
St. Pius X – Parish Hall
Middletown, CT

Presented by:

Jim Thomas, OFS

Contact: tausign@gmail.com

