

Fraternities: *Gathering as One* Franciscan Journey Chapter 28

By Lester Bach OFM Cap



Fraternities – Inspired by St. Francis

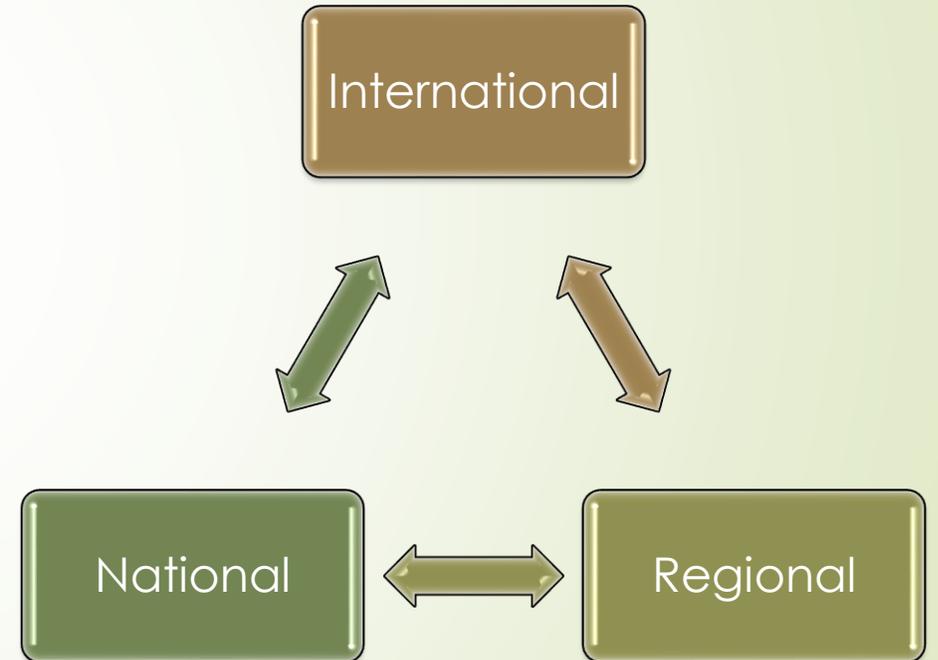
- Secular Franciscans divided into 3 levels that supports individual fraternities
- Purpose to promote the union & mutual collaboration among brothers & sisters
- Communal presence in both the local & universal Church that provide service to the world & specifically, the life of society
- Brothers & Sisters gather in local fraternities established in connection with local church or religious house, or in personal fraternities, constituted for valid reasons recognized in decree of establishment (Constitution – article 28.1, 28.2, 28.3)



Levels of Fraternities –

Co-ordinated and Connected according to norm of Rule and the Constitutions

- ▶ Rule 20 – Fraternities have own juridical personality in the Church
- ▶ Should acquire a civil juridical personality for fulfillment of their mission
- ▶ National Council give guidelines concerning motivations & procedures to be followed
- ▶ National Statutes – indicate criteria for organization in nation
- ▶ Application to be left to prudent judgement of leaders of fraternities concerned & of national council (Constitution – article 29.1, 29.2, 29.3)



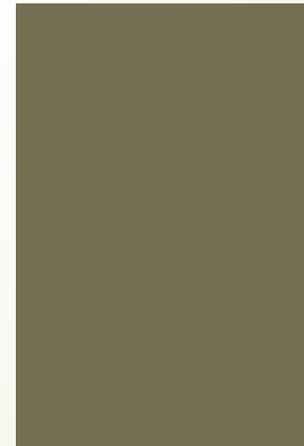
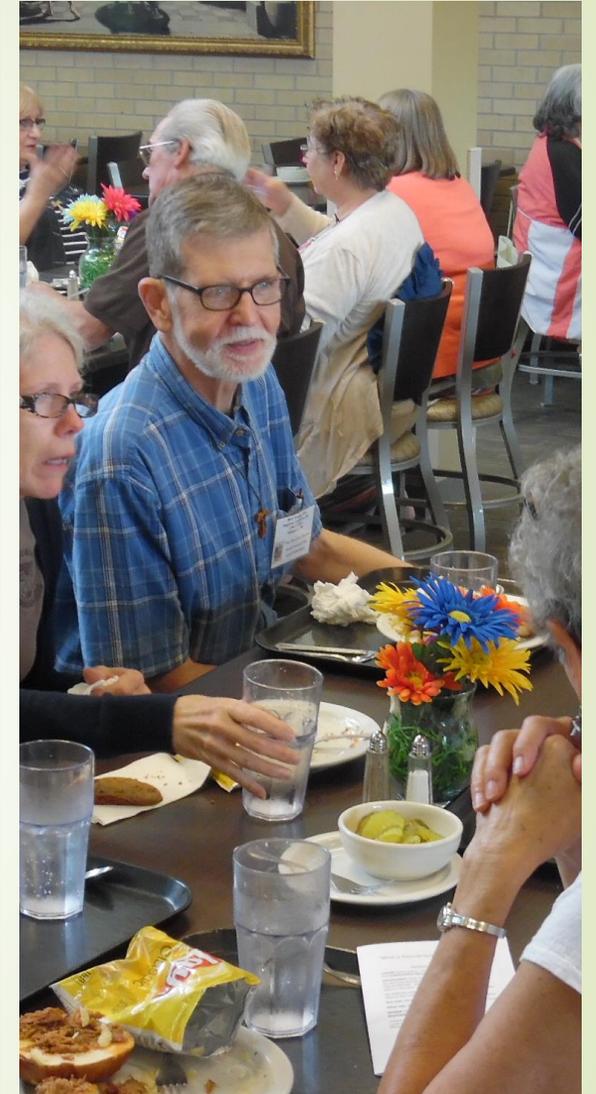
Code of Canon Law

► Associations whose members share in the spirit of some religious institute while in secular life, lead an apostolic life, and strive for Christian perfection under the higher direction (*Altius Moderamen*) of the same institution are called third orders or some other appropriate name.



Secular Franciscan Order – Public Association of Christian Faithful

- Secular Franciscan Order is under the jurisdiction of 2 Roman congregations –
 - the Congregation for the Institute of Consecrated Life
 - Society of Apostolic life



Privileged Public Association –

- ▶ Special responsibilities to Church & Franciscan Family
- ▶ Church assigns a mission to be a model in our inner life in the Church & in our outreach to the world
- ▶ When a fraternity is established – it possesses a public juridic personality in the Church
- ▶ Our profession of the OFS Rule consecrates us
- ▶ We choose not to be influenced by non-gospel values, attitudes or policies – in this sense – Secular Franciscans leave the world

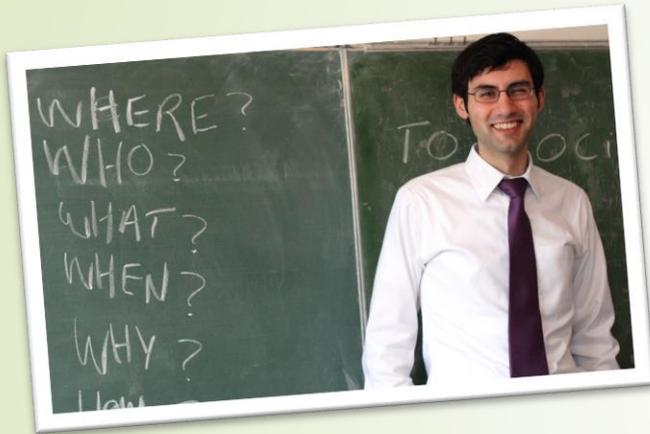


Secular Franciscans – International Order

- Profession establishes a permanent relationship with Franciscan brothers & sisters throughout the world
- Much of Franciscan life takes place at the local level – but we must not forget that we are a part of an international Order



Franciscan Vision – Many Faces



Unity – not monolithic



All contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God –
Re-building of the Church



St. Pope John Paul the Great

(Address to 10th General Chapter of the SFO –
Nov. 22, 2002)

► Your Order should be a model of organic, structural & charismatic unity on all levels – to present to the world a **Community of Love**

Bear personal consistent & firmness of witness in:

1. **Family life**
2. **Associations with brothers & sisters of the same Father**
3. **Participation in the life of society**

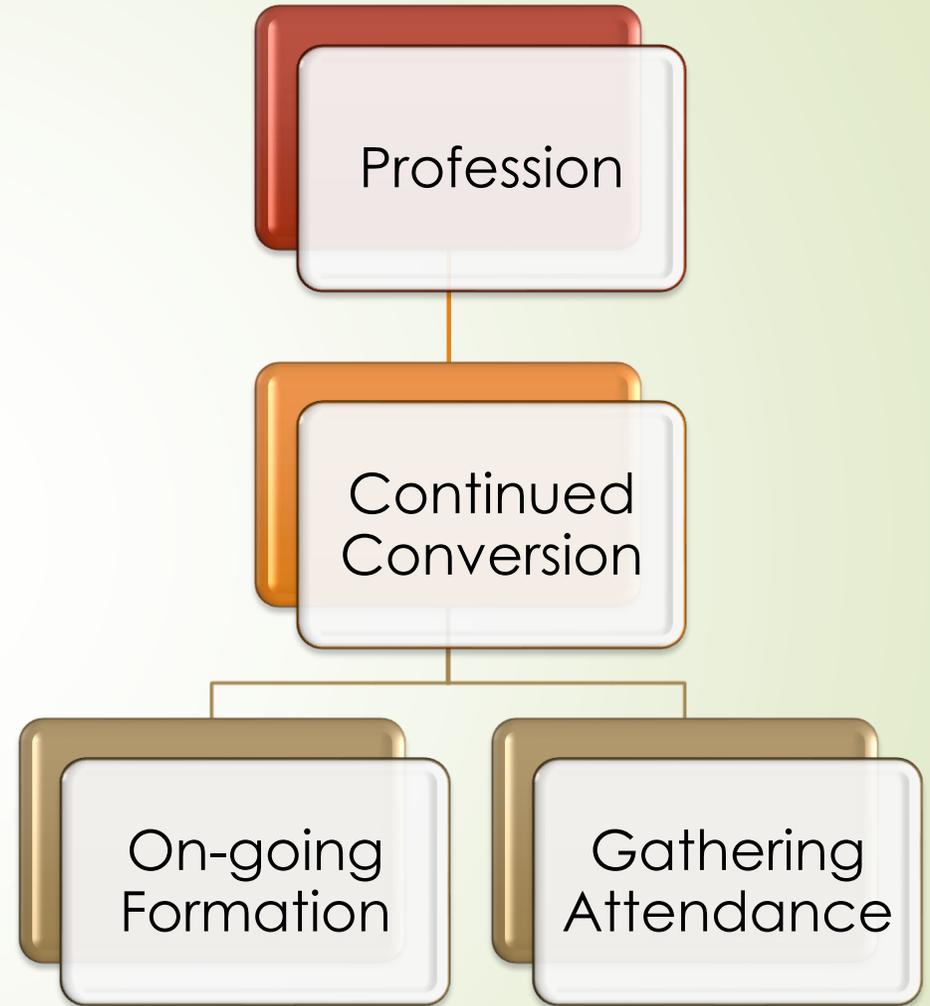
In virtue of your Profession – The RULE & Constitutions must be a reference point for everyday experience, on the basis of a specific vocation

It is necessary to commit oneself to conviction to the “high measure of ordinary Christian life

The family is the primary environment in which to live the Christian commitment & Franciscan vocation, giving it space for prayer, to the Word of God, Christian catechesis, & making every effort to respect all life, from conception & in all situations, until death....

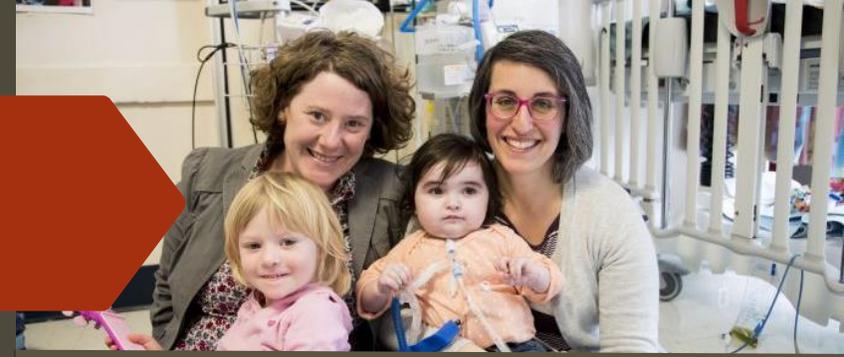
Profession – *not the end of Conversion or Formation*

- It is the beginning of a life lived in fraternity that requires regular **conversion & on-going formation**
- **Franciscan life is given preference** in making personal decisions – ordinarily, nothing takes preference - except for special circumstances
- This is true in regard to **attendance at regular gatherings of the local fraternity.**



Participation in a Fraternity is Essential

- ▶ Belonging to the OFS requires us to insert ourselves & participate in a fraternity
- ▶ Appropriate initiatives should be adopted according to the national statutes, to keep those brothers & sisters united to the fraternity who – for valid reasons of health, family, work or distance – cannot actively participate in community life (*Constitutions – article 53.3*)



Fraternity is the basic structure of the OFS

- ▶ A vibrant Franciscan community requires everyone's cooperation
- ▶ When questions of Canon Law arise in fraternity, wise to consult canon lawyer to help with the issue
 - ...guesswork creates more problems Canonical helps is way of dealing with reality – where God is found



Unity & Structure of the Order

- Regional fraternity and Executive Council assures link between local fraternity, the region and the national fraternity (*Constitutions – article 61.1*)
- National fraternity and council unites the regional fraternities with the international fraternity
- International fraternity unites the Catholic Franciscan fraternities throughout the world



International Order - the Presidency

- The presidency coordinates, animates & guides the OFS at the international level & attends to resolution of urgent problems (*Constitution – article 70.1 to .4*)



Supporting each other

- ▶ Recognize Servant Leaders at every level who strive to animate Franciscan life in fraternities
- ▶ Exchange of creative ideas about issues that arise in life
- ▶ Collaborate in ministry & social action
- ▶ In all discourse, conversations and dialogue show respect and reverence
- ▶ Do everything possible to maintain healthy relationships
- ▶ Invite all people on all sides of argument to have common good as goal
- ▶ Our goal is unity & understanding



Spirituality of Reconciliation

- ▶ The Spirit of Assisi – respectful and attentive dialogue among members of different religious traditions,
- ▶ Rely upon “the Most High God who is good, all good, the highest good”
- ▶ In the figure of the Poverello those who continue to struggle for reconciliation among nations and individuals may find a sign of HOPE
- ▶ Whenever Francis spoke to people, birds, or wolves – he always began with these words.
- ▶ “May the Lord give you Peace”
(Poverty & Joy – Wm Short OFM – pg. 130)

