

Chapter 1

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER (OFS)¹

1.

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church², 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 St. Francis of Assisi³. 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 Church⁴.

2.

The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in this family circle. It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church⁵.

3.

The present rule, succeeding *Memoriale propositi* (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Its interpretation belongs to the Holy See and its application will be made by the General Constitutions and particular statutes.

Chapter 2

THE WAY OF LIFE

4.

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people⁶.

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly⁷.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel⁸.

5.

Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of

¹ Also known as the Secular Franciscan Fraternity or, its earlier designation, the Franciscan Third Order, with the initials T.O.F.

² Vatican II, Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) 43.

³ Pius XII, *Discourse to the Tertiaries*, 1/7/1956.

⁴ Vatican II, Decree on Lay Apostolate (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) 4:8.

⁵ Can. 702, 1. [now: Can. 314.](#)

⁶ 1 Celano 18:115 (*Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, Volume 1* (1 FA:ED), *The Saint, Life of Francis Thomas of Celano* (1C) 18, page 196, 1C 115, p. 283.)

⁷ Jn 3:16; 10:10; 14:6.

⁸ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 30:8.



Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of Saint Francis, who often said “I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood”⁹, should be the inspiration and pattern of their eucharistic life.

6.

They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity¹⁰.

7.

United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance”¹¹, and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls “conversion”. Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily¹².

On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace¹³.

8.

As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do¹⁴.

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.

9.

The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family¹⁵. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently¹⁶.

10.

Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father’s hands, let them faithfully fulfil the duties proper to their various circumstances of life¹⁷. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions¹⁸.

⁹ Cf. *Test 10* (1 FA:ED, p. 125).

¹⁰ Paul VI, *Discourse to the Tertiaries*, 19/5/1971.

¹¹ *Memoriale propositi* (Introduction, address).

¹² *Lumen Gentium* 8; Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis Redintegratio*) 4; Apostolic Constitution “*Paenitemini*”, preamble.

¹³ Vatican II, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*) 18:b.

¹⁴ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4.

¹⁵ 2 *Celano* 198 (2 FA:ED, 2C 198, p. 374).

¹⁶ *Lumen Gentium* 67; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 4.

¹⁷ *Lumen Gentium* 41.

¹⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 42:b.

