

LIVING FRATERNITY

Theme: Our Commitment to the Franciscan Way of Life ...

In this month of October 2022, we present you with a reflection on our commitment to the Secular Franciscan Order along with some excerpts from the document *The Commitment to Profession* by Fr. Felice Cangelosi, ofmcap. We thought that in this month where we celebrate the feast of Saint Francis as well as well as Thanksgiving gatherings, it would be the occasion to think about the commitment to our Franciscan way of life.

Recall: Our monthly meeting should favour *an encounter with Christ*. A spirit of prayer heralds a good encounter, and a good preparation promotes communal experience.

OCTOBER 2022 MONTHLY MEETING

Opening of the meeting

The members can offer suggestions for a song. After the chosen song, the prayer according to the Ritual or one chosen by the fraternity starts the meeting.

Introduction

In the next paragraphs, you will find some excerpts that are of interest to all our members who have made their commitment as well as to members presently in the process of initial formation. These excerpts present some interesting information about our Order.

The value of profession in the OFS

- Now we come to the meaning of the term Profession and of the expression promise to live the gospel life, found in the Rule, the Constitutions and the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order. They indicate the effort and commitment Secular Franciscan take on when they make Profession. In the SFO Rule, Constitutions and Ritual the same terms indicate the commitment, similarly assumed before God and the Church, to observe the gospel after the manner of St Francis.
- What we have now shown in the primitive legislation of the Franciscan movement enables us to list the constitutive elements of the profession of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. It involves:
 - a) an obligation contracted before God;
 - b) the commitment to observe a form of life or Rule;
 - c) definitive incorporation into the Order.

- The same clear awareness not only remains unchanged but is brought out even more strongly and clearly in the Rule of Paul VI and in the Constitutions subsequently approved by the Congregation for Consecrated Life, as well as in the Ritual, itself approved by the Congregation for Divine Worship. The SFO is “a lay Order, a true Order” constituting “a school of integral Christian perfection”, exactly like any Religious Institute.

After the manner of St Francis

- What is promised is to live the gospel after the manner of St Francis, following in his footsteps and according to his example and the instructions given by him, which today are gathered together in the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.
- The constant concern to underline the fact that Secular Franciscans intend to live the gospel after the manner of St Francis and by means of this Rule authenticated by the Church (Rule 2; General Constitution 1,3; 8,1), is by no means fortuitous.
- Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order therefore has this essential structure: the life of Secular Franciscans depends on the gospel, mediated by the inspiration and experience of Francis of Assisi, who from the beginning of his conversion took it as his rule of life and action.
- However, we still need to make the point that Francis’ intention was simply to return to the Gospel of Jesus. Every Franciscan vocation is therefore an evangelicalFranciscan vocation, not because Francis’ experience is intended as a substitute for the gospel, but because the gospel is rendered transparent through the mediation of Francis.
- In conclusion, Profession in the Secular Franciscan Order, as a promise to live the gospel in the manner of St Francis, aims to put before us the radical, light-filled and joyful style in which Francis listens to the gospel and commits himself to live it.

Reflection on the previous paragraphs

The animator should allow some time for each member to read silently the content of the previous paragraphs. Afterwards, each member should be encouraged to share their thoughts.

The animator could suggest the following question : Have these paragraphs given you any additional information about the Secular Franciscan Order? Please explain your choice.

Sharing of our personal journey

This moment could serve to renew our profession our possible celebrate the anniversaries of the members present.

- Recall the commitment to Gospel Life –
I, N.N., renew my commitment to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, after the example of St. Francis of Assisi, according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

* Do the renewal of the commitment –

I, N.N., renew my commitment to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, after the example of St. Francis of Assisi, according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

* Celebrate profession anniversaries –

We thank you, Lord, for calling us to the Secular Franciscan Order. We ask your pardon for all our shortcomings, weaknesses and transgressions against our commitment to the gospel life and against the Rule. We pray that you will allow us to experience once again the fervour and readiness of that first day when we entered the fraternity. We renew once again our commitment to the gospel life, according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, until the end of our days. Grant also that we may live in harmony with our brothers and sisters, and may give witness to younger people of the great gift we received from you: our Franciscan calling to “go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Church’s mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by our life and words.” Amen.

Biblical Reflection:

Read the texts of Sunday or of the day, or the preceding or following day of the meeting.

- * Take a moment of reflection; then underline words or inspiring phrases ...
- * Share your thoughts on the gospel: a) How can it be integrated in our life

Linking points to the Rule and the General Constitutions

In his presentation, Fr. Felice cited the following articles from the Rule and the General Constitutions for our consideration.

Rule Article 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 Church.

General Constitutions Article 1.3

From the beginning, the Secular Franciscan Order has had its own proper place in the Franciscan Family. It is formed by the organic union of all the Catholic fraternities whose members, moved by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves through profession to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis, in their secular state, following the Rule approved by the Church.

Life- Objective

In this month of October, let us enjoy the beauty of nature as the great gift from our Lord given to us to enjoy and protect as our common home ...

Events and Information from the Church and the Order

Remind the members of regional and local activities.

End of the meeting: (song or prayer chosen by the fraternity)

At Home

As a follow-up, read this section on **Christ, centre of life**

In the light of the foregoing considerations we can understand the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, when it says that St Francis of Assisi “made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and with people”.

This is an implicit exhortation to those who make profession in the Secular Franciscan Order, so that they may do the same.

But the Rule also offers a wonderful Christological proclamation, by affirming: “Christ, gift of the Father’s love, is the way to Him, is the truth into which we are guided by the Holy Spirit, and the life which He came to give in abundance”.

This marvellous statement, placed right at the beginning of the Rule, ought to rouse the secular brothers and sisters to contemplate lovingly the “gift of the Father’s love”, constantly directing their gaze towards Jesus. It should also encourage them to assess their lives constantly against the standard of Him who is the way, the truth and the life. As for Francis, so for Secular Franciscans, Christian discipleship is born of love for Him, a love so total and radical that they are brought to imitate the person of the Beloved, and to a union with Him whereby they are conformed to Him who is the object of their love.

The Rule proposes just such a programme when it states in Rule, Article 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 life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions”.

In conclusion, for Secular Franciscans, to follow Christ is to be conformed to Him; it means to carry out the commitment involved in the profession to observe the gospel in the manner of St Francis by living all the demands of the gospel to its very depths, to the very end, including death, and thus to open oneself to receive the promises proclaimed by the gospel itself.