

## **SECULAR FRANCISCANS LIVING THE SCRIPTURES**

St Francis made it clear to all his followers, friars, nuns, and seculars, that the Sacred Scriptures are the essence of our life in following Jesus. Secular Franciscans find their strength and spiritual nourishment in their monthly meetings. These meetings begin with prayer and contain Scripture study, reading the life of St Francis, spiritual input by the Spiritual Assistant, (who is normally a friar), fraternity business and enjoying one another's company, as a family.

## **VOCATION: CALLED TO BE LAY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH**

Secular Franciscans are not a religious Order but a secular Order in the Church. They are an association of laity and secular priests, working in mutual support and prayer to grow in holiness as Catholics. The Secular Franciscan Order revised its Rule of Life in 1978, in obedience to Pope Paul VI's request that all Orders return to their origin. This Rule points the way clearly to the Gospels. With St Francis, St Clare, St Anthony, and with all the Franciscan men and women over the past eight hundred years,

Secular Franciscans keep Jesus at the centre of their lives.

## **HOW TO ENTER THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

When you recognize that God may be calling you to the Secular Franciscan way, you contact a Fraternity of the Order in your area. A "fraternity" is a local group of Secular Franciscans. The Fraternity will welcome you and give you information as an Inquirer. After a short time, if it seems right to you and to the Fraternity, you are accepted as a Candidate to the Order, and you receive thorough instruction in the Franciscan way. During Candidacy, you are helped to grow in prayer. After a year or more, you are invited to make your Profession, which is a commitment to the Franciscan way of following Jesus for the rest of your life.

*For more information please contact:*

## **THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

## ***SECULAR FRANCISCANS***

## ***WHO ARE WE?***

In 1209, in Assisi in Italy, Francesco Bernardone heard a special call from Jesus and began to live a simple life based on the Gospel. Men and women were fascinated with him as a person and as a leader. His followers very quickly numbered in the thousands. Francis was always a Catholic. The Church authorities brought his followers into a more organised way of life in order to preserve the dream of St Francis. Those who were

not friars or nuns - the laity and secular priests - became known as the "The Third Order of Penance" until 1978, when Pope Paul VI approved the new Rule of the "Secular Franciscan Order". These Franciscan men and women are an integral part of the international family of St Francis of Assisi.

### **SECULAR FRANCISCANS**

are married or single persons, living in gospel simplicity in their homes, without religious vows. Franciscans have their distinctive spirituality. "Spirituality" simply means a way of living the call of Jesus to follow him by the power of the Holy Spirit. Franciscan men and women offer this way as a gift to the Church and the world. St Francis has inspired people for over eight hundred years to live simple lives, dedicated to following the Lord Jesus. So, as fascinating as St Francis is, if we look at him and do not see Jesus, we miss the point of Francis' life.

### **ALL FRANCISCANS ARE CALLED**

to imitate St Francis in his total abandonment to Jesus Christ.

“Abandonment” is not about "giving-up

things", but about giving ourselves over to God's plan for our lives, just as the Lord Jesus taught the Apostles and the first followers. Jesus' teaching is clearest through his way of the cross.

A Secular Franciscan tries to live an apostolic life. This means to live the way the Apostles did: Jesus was the centre of their lives. They listened to his teachings, then went out and brought the Good News, the Gospel of God's love, to everyone they met. This, of course, is the task of every Christian: to abandon ourselves to God as Jesus and Francis did.

### **SAINT FRANCIS POINTS TO JESUS**

but we can sometimes get lost in long discussions of what poverty and simplicity mean in practical terms. We know that St Francis *abandoned* himself to God's plan for his life, just as the Lord Jesus did on the cross. Franciscan poverty and simplicity is a very positive approach to material possessions. We know that only God can "own" anything, and that we are here as pilgrims and strangers who can enjoy this wonderful universe. St Francis, the patron of ecologists, revered all people

and all creation, as the property of his Father in Heaven. Material things became less and less important to Francis as he grew in trusting God to care for him

### **SAINT FRANCIS POINTS TO HUMANITY:**

His preaching was simple and direct, and he talked about our human reality. He spoke the common people's Latin and was a pioneer of modern Italian poetry. His words were easily understood by ordinary people, who longed for God in their difficult lives. He filled his mind and heart with Sacred Scripture, which came alive for the people. Although aware of the human weaknesses that leaders share with all of us, he was completely loyal to the Catholic Church and its leadership. St Francis had a very brief military career and the horrors of war convinced him to be a peacemaker. His love for Mary, Mother of God, was tender and joyous. All Franciscans uphold the same positive human values as St Francis did.