

THE WINDS OF RENEWAL

Around eight hundred years ago, an amazing movement of the Holy Spirit swept through the Catholic Church. Powerful workings of the Spirit were evidenced among the people of God, and the Church was renewed.

This remarkable renewal was largely accomplished through the simple faith and loving response of St Francis of Assisi. By word and example, he called all men and women, married and single, clerics and religious, to respond to the movement of the Spirit.

Francis called people to renew their life of faith and love, inspired by the Gospel. People came together in fraternities to support one another in their relationship with Jesus, and to be witnesses of gospel life in the Church and in the world.

These clerics and lay people did not separate themselves from the Church but supported the Church in humble service befitting their state in life.

The Lord's command to Francis, "Rebuild my Church!", was obeyed by Francis and his followers.

SECULAR FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY

The fraternities of clergy and lay people inspired by St Francis still exist today. We are now called the Secular Franciscan Order and we are a worldwide fraternity, called to follow Jesus Christ in the footsteps of St Francis. We aim to observe the gospel of Jesus and to make him the centre of our lives with God and people.

A Call to Follow Jesus Christ

Just as in the days of St Francis, we build loving relationships with others, both in our fraternities and beyond them. We remember the words of Jesus, "By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples" (Jn 13:35). We seek to live this gospel and to be completely open to the working of the Holy Spirit in our life together, while submitting our fraternity to the guidance of the Catholic Church.

In practice, this means joining others once a month or even weekly, to build relationships of heart and mind with Jesus, praying, studying the Scriptures and sharing one another's lives. We know the healing effects of penance and Reconciliation, and the uniting effect of the Eucharist.

As followers of Jesus day by day, we Secular Franciscans move from the gospel to our experience of life and from life back to the gospel. We try to conform continually to the image of Jesus Christ.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

Jesus may be calling you to be a Secular Franciscan. If you want to be involved in renewing the Church and in being an instrument of peace in the world, if you want to live the gospel of Jesus Christ in a balanced and time-tested way, if you would welcome the support of a fraternity that is open to the Holy Spirit, then come and try out our way of life.

There are probably Franciscans, either religious or secular, close to you. There are about seventy Secular Franciscan local Fraternities in the Oceania National Fraternity. To find a Secular Franciscan Fraternity, contact the address listed on the back of this page. Perhaps, a Secular Franciscan can accompany you to the fraternity meeting and introduce you to the members.

The Secular Franciscans may be just the ones whom you have been looking for. Come and see. Join our fraternity, and help us rebuild the Church with St Francis of Assisi.



THE TAU CROSS

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

St Francis of Assisi's

PRAYER BEFORE THE CRUCIFIX

Most High,
glorious God,
enlighten the darkness of my heart
and give me
true faith,
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge,
Lord,
that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.

CONTACT:

The Secular Franciscan Order has chosen the Tau Cross as its distinctive sign and symbol of membership. It is a sign of penance, conversion and renewal.

“Tau” is the Greek word for the letter “T”, which is “Tav” in Hebrew.

The Prophet Ezekiel said, “Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross (a *tav*) on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of all the filth practised in it” (Ezk 9:4).

Friar Thomas of Celano says that St Francis “preferred the Tau above all other symbols: he used it as his only signature for his letters, and he painted the image of it on the walls of all the cells” (3 Cel 3).

St Bonaventure said, “This Tau symbol had all the veneration and all the devotion of the saint (Francis): he spoke of it often in order to recommend it, and he traced it on himself before beginning each of his actions” (Lm. 2:9).

“REBUILD
MY
CHURCH”

