

How do you enter the Secular Franciscan Order?

When a man or a woman feels that God may be calling them to the Franciscan way, they should contact the fraternity of the Order nearest to where they live.

A "fraternity" is a local group of Secular Franciscans. Being a Secular Franciscan is not something one does alone. St. Francis gathered a community around himself and together they made a difference in their own lives and in the world.

Your local fraternity will give you information about monthly meeting times and welcome you as an *Inquirer*. After a short time, if it seems right to you and the fraternity, you will be accepted as a *Candidate* to the Order and receive very thorough instruction in the Franciscan way over a period of up to two years.

At the conclusion of this time you will be invited to make your *Profession* a life commitment to the Franciscan way of following Jesus.

As a Secular Franciscan you are a member of the Franciscan family comprising friars (priests and brothers), nuns and sisters, and secular men and women. At present there are about a million members of the worldwide Franciscan family.

FROM OUR RULE

Article 4

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: To observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people.

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 abundantly.

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

Have you considered?

CONTACT:

Are you a mid-aged Catholic?

The Secular Franciscan Order...

Please consider!

Is your life all it could be?

Jesus came that we may have life and have it abundantly...John 10:10.

Do you sometimes stop to reflect on your life and feel a tinge of dissatisfaction? Perhaps your life is not all that it should be.

You are a practising Catholic and attend your parish church regularly; but you feel that something is missing. Your life is not fully satisfying; not full of joy. There is not the abundance of life promised by Jesus.

What are your anxieties and concerns about life?

Maybe you have a feeling of alienation from the world at large and some sorrow for its present condition. The world seems to have different values from your own; it seems to be governed by an ethos of greed and materialism. You experience the world as an ungodly and demanding place and may even feel that your contribution to it is not having the impact that you would like.

You see people suffer for lack of a job. You see people turn to alcohol and drugs in order to alleviate their anxieties and to mask the lack of direction in their lives. Perhaps you have seen this in your family and so you are searching for solutions.

You are concerned that the remainder of your working life should be fruitful. You are not so much concerned about gaining material wealth as you are about making a

positive impact in your sphere of influence.

Because your children are more self-reliant now, you may have more time than in the past to think about what is important in life. You would like your life to contribute to making this world a better place; and you would like to experience that abundance of life that was promised by Jesus.

What have the Secular Franciscans to offer?

In John's Gospel, Jesus is pictured as the gate through which we can enter into a full and abundant life. Jesus is the way, in fact the only way to a rewarding and satisfying life.

The Secular Franciscan Order offers its members a way of life that is the one Jesus told us to follow — a way of life based on his gospel. What is more, as a member, you are helped on your journey by the companionship and support of fellow Christians.

In the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi, Secular Franciscans devote themselves to living the gospel in the world. They have a Rule of Life to guide them on their journey - a rule that follows the path set by St. Francis.

What does living the gospel mean?

Essentially, living the gospel means developing a deeper spirituality than merely attending Mass on Sunday and being a good parishioner. These things are praiseworthy and necessary but they only open the gate for entering Jesus' way of life.

Secular Franciscans read, reflect on and discuss the gospels as well as the writings of St. Francis, St. Clare and other Franciscan saints. In this way the key elements of St. Francis' spirituality are discovered and they become touchstones for our guidance in dealing with life's dilemmas.

Franciscan spirituality is more than simple piety. It takes us beyond religious rituals into the deeper reality of what it truly means to be human. Ritual, prayer and reflection are food for our journey, but it is the life of Jesus as revealed in Holy Scripture that shows us how our life journey should progress.

The Franciscan emphases in interpreting the gospel of Jesus are truly rewarding for the follower of St. Francis. By following in the footsteps of St. Francis, the Secular Franciscan can attain peace of spirit — a peace that transcends all evil in the world and opens the way to perfect joy. By this means, Jesus' promise of abundant life can be ours, whatever life's circumstances.