**Secular Franciscan Order**



***Saint Louis IX, King of France***

**The Rule with Commentary**

**The General Constitutions**

**The Ritual of the Order**

Pax et Bonum

Peace and Good

This booklet of Secular Franciscan legislation is based on a previous Australian edition, popularly called “The Trilogy” which has now been updated, reformatted and reprinted by the National Council. We are very grateful for the huge effort that has gone into producing this edition of our essential legislation.

The Rule, Constitution, and Ritual are the definitive expression of the Way of Life of all members of the Secular Franciscan Order. For this reason, the Trilogy is part of our initial, ongoing and personal formation. If we wish to live an authentic Franciscan way of life approved by the Church, for our time, then we must be informed by our legislation.

However, although it is true that the Church has placed its seal of approval on our legislation, it is also true that God has placed his seal – the stigmata – on the person of Saint Francis himself.

It is Saint Francis who tells us that the Holy Spirit is the true Minister General of the Franciscan Order (2 Celano 193). It is Saint Francis who tells us that we must have “a spirit of prayer and devotion” if we are to have a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The real challenge is to harmonize life, which always comes first, with law. May the Holy Spirit always be our guide.

Lola Kelly, ofs

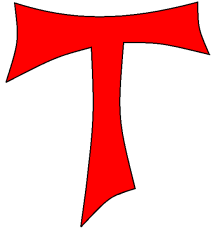
National Minister

Secular Franciscan Order

Australia

The National Council of the Secular Franciscan Order in Australia

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**Name ……..…………………..…………………..**

**Fraternity ………………..………………………**

**Received by …………………...................……**

**Date …….………………………………………..**

**Professed by …………………………………..**

**Date of Reception …….………………………**

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***Excerpts from:***

**THE RULE OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER IS APPROVED AND CONFIRMED**

**Pope Paul VI**

In perpetual remembrance, - The Seraphic Patriarch Saint Francis of Assisi, during his life and even after his beautiful death, not only attracted many to serve God in the religious family founded by him but also drew numerous members of the laity to enter his communities as far as possible while remaining in the world. Moreover, to use the words of our predecessor Pius IX, “It seems… that there was never anyone in whom there shone forth more vividly and who resembled more the image of Jesus Christ and the evangelical form of life than Francis.” (Encycl. *“Rite Expiatis”,* April 30, 1926: AAS, 18, 1926, p. 154).

We are happy that the “Franciscan Charism” today is still a force for the good of the Church and the human community, despite the infiltration of doctrines and tendencies that alienate people from God and from the supernatural.

Having consulted with the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, which has diligently examined and carefully evaluated the text, we approve and confirm with our apostolic authority and sanction the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

By this letter and our apostolic authority, we abrogate the previous rule of what was formerly called the Franciscan Third Order.

Given at Rome at St. Peter’s, under the ring of the Fisherman, on June 24, 1978, the 16th year of our pontificate.

John Cardinal Villot  
*Secretary of State*

***Excerpts from:***

**LETTER OF THE FOUR MINISTERS GENERAL  
OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**

To the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order,

We joyfully inform you that the Holy See, by means of the Apostolic Letter “*Seraphicus Patriarca*,” dated June 24, 1978, and “under the ring of the Fisherman,” has approved the revised Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order which abrogates and takes the place of the preceding rule of Pope Leo XIII.

It is to Pope Paul VI that we owe this splendid gift, which he bestowed shortly before he left this earth. He loved you. Many times, indeed, he demonstrated his love for the Secular Franciscan Order and ad­dressed to you unforgettable words.

The rule that we present to you today is not only the fruit of [much] labour. The Church consigns it to you as a norm of life.

The hope of renewal hinges upon returning to the origins and to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi and of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance who received from him their inspiration and guidance. This renewal also depends upon openness to the Spirit in the signs of the times.

We, the Franciscan Ministers, with all our friars are ever ready and open to offer you all our assistance so that we may walk together in the way of the Lord.

Rome, October 4, 1978.

Fr. Constantine Koser O.F.M., - Minister General  
Fr. Vitale M. Bommarco O.F.M.Conv., - Minister General  
Fr. Paschal Rywalski O.F.M.Cap., - Minister General  
Fr. Roland J. Faley T.O.R., - Minister General

TEXT OF THE PROLOGUE TO:

**THE RULE OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

**Prologue:**

**Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance**

(Circa 1210 – 1215)

In the name of the Lord!

**Chapter One**

**Concerning Those Who Do Penance**

All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mark 12:30), and love their neighbours as themselves (cf. Matt. 22:39) and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and produce worthy fruits of penance.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, because “the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them” (cf. Isa. 11:2) and he will make “his home and dwelling among them” (cf. John 14:23) and they are the sons of the heavenly Father (cf. Matt. 5:45) whose works they do and they are the spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 12:50).

We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord Jesus Christ, we are brothers to him when we fulfil “the will of the Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 12:50).

*COMMENTARY*

**OFFICIAL COMMENTARY**

Official Commentary prepared by the

National Spiritual Assistants’ Commission

Benet A. Fonck O.F.M., co-ordinator

The Commentary, written by Benet Fonck O.F.M., is not part of the official text of the Rule or a legal document.

***Prologue***

*The new rule is prefaced by a word from St. Francis himself. This text, a new version of the “Letter to All the Faithful,” is both a summary of Franciscan gospel living and an immediate contact with the model and inspiration for observing the gospel - Francis himself.*

*Francis’ letter touches two points: the life of a person who does “penance” (i.e., a person turned toward God), and the life of a person who refuses this grace.*

*First of all, a person turned toward God follows the “teaching and footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ” by responding to the inviting grace of God and living in union with Jesus: constant spiritual renewal, awareness of God’s power and presence, and a promise of eternal happiness.*

TEXT OF THE PROLOGUE

We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20) through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give light to others by example (cf. Matt. 5:16).

Oh how glorious it is to have a great and Holy Father in heaven! Oh how glorious it is to have such a beautiful and admirable Spouse, the Holy Paraclete.

Oh, how glorious it is to have such a Brother and such a Son, loved, beloved, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable and desirable above all: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave up his life for his sheep (cf. John 10:15) and prayed to the Father saying:

“Oh holy Father, protect them with your name (cf. John 17:11) whom you gave me out of the world. I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me and they received it. They have known that in truth I came from you, they have believed that it was you who sent me. For these I pray, not for the world (cf. John 17:9). Bless and consecrate them and I consecrate myself for their sakes. I do not pray for them alone; I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word (cf. John 17:20) that they may be holy by being one as we are (cf. John 17:11). And I desire, Father, to have them in my company where I am to see this glory of mine in your kingdom” (cf. John 17:6-24).

*COMMENTARY*

*Most appropriate are the quotes from Jesus’ high priestly prayer (cf. John 17) which makes the intense union between Jesus and his disciples and their union among themselves the model for our union with Christ and with others. Francis bids us to live the gospel of Jesus Christ by loving the Lord our God and serving our neighbour, by participating in the Holy Eucharist and thereby building a lived experience of togetherness, by rejecting sin and turning in a new direction and by leading a life in which we mirror Christ. This leads to a new kind of happiness, for we share the Lord’s life and mission, and we give him birth again and again in our world. This summary of gospel living in the prologue prefigures the second chapter of the rule.*

TEXT OF THE PROLOGUE

**Chapter Two**

**Concerning Those Who Do Not Do Penance**

But all those men and women who are not doing penance and do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and live in vices and sin and yield to evil concupiscence and to the *wicked desires of the flesh,* and do not observe what *they have promised to the Lord,* and are slaves to the world, in their bodies, by carnal desires and the anxieties and cares of this life (cf. John 8:41).

These are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ; they do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God who is the true wisdom of the Father. Concerning them, it is said, “Their skill was swallowed up” (Ps 107:27) and “cursed are those who turn away from your commands” (Ps 119:21). They see and acknowledge, they know and do bad things and knowingly destroy their own souls.

See, you who are blind, deceived by your enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, for it is pleasant to the body to commit sin and it is bitter to make it serve God because all vices and sins come out and “proceed from the heart of man” as the Lord says in the gospel (cf. Matt. 7:21) and you have nothing in this world and in the next, and you thought you would possess the vanities of this world for a long time.

But you have been deceived, for the day and the hour will come to which you give no thought and which you do not know and of which you are ignorant. The body grows infirm, death approaches, and so it dies a bitter death and no matter where or when or how man dies, in the guilt of sin, without penance or satisfaction, though he can make satisfaction but does not do it.

*COMMENTARY*

*Secondly, the person who refuses this grace lacks wisdom and light, loses one’s perspective on striving for perfect joy and finds oneself enslaved and smothered by the demonic influences of life. Hence, they have no happiness in this world or the next. Francis’ words are stark, straight-forward, and uncompromising, but the core message is valid and ever- true.*

TEXT OF THE PROLOGUE

The devil snatches the soul from his body with such anguish and tribulation that no one can know it except he who endures it, and all the talents and power and “knowledge and wisdom” (2 Chronicles 1:12) which they thought they had will be taken away from them (cf. Luke 8:18; Mark 4:25) and they leave their goods to relatives and friends who take and divide them and say afterwards, “Cursed be his soul because he could have given us more, he could have acquired more than he did.” The worms eat up the body and so they have lost body and soul during this short earthly life and will go into the inferno where they will suffer torture without end.

All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God (cf. 1 John 4:17) to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above. And let those who do not know how to read have them read to them.

And may they keep them in their mind and carry them out, in a holy manner to the end, because they are “spirit and life” (John 6:64).

And those who will not do this will have to render “an account on the day of judgement” (cf. Matt. 12:36) before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 14:10).

*(Cajetan Esser O.F.M., Die Opuscula des hl. Franziskus von Assisi. Nuova Ediz. Critica, Grottaferrata, 1976; translated by Marion A. Habig O.F.M.)*

**THE RULE OF THE**

**SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

**WITH COMMENTARY**

TEXT OF THE RULE

**THE RULE**

**Chapter One**

**The Secular Franciscan Order (O.F.S.)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

1. The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised by the Holy Spirit in the Church,[[2]](#footnote-2) unites all members of the people of God – laity, religious and priests – who recognise that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.[[3]](#footnote-3) 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 Church.[[4]](#footnote-4)

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 Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.[[5]](#footnote-5)

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.

COMMENTARY

***The Rule***

***Chapter One***

***Secular Franciscan Order.***

*1. This first chapter details the place of the Secular Franciscan Order in the Church, in the Franciscan Family and in the history of the Order itself. The first paragraph shows how the Franciscan Family, as one of the many spiritual families in the Church, is united with all the people of God by the call of the Holy Spirit and the following of Jesus Christ.*

*Still, in addition to this, the way of Francis gives the Franciscan Family, with its common charism but varied expressions, a distinctive cast, as it strives for holiness and binds together the laity, religious and clergy in the life and mission of the Church.*

*2. This second paragraph identifies the Secular Franciscan as a vital part of the whole family of Francis and points out its special secular character. It also stresses that all the necessary prerequisites are present to make it an official Order within the Catholic Church.*

*3. The continuity with past rules, its influence in today’s world and its approval by the Church are discussed in this third paragraph. This rule is the fourth expression in eight centuries. It makes the unchanging principles of Franciscan gospel living applicable and relevant today. The leaders of the Church constantly guide this movement from gospel to life.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

**Chapter Two**

**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 centre of his life with God and people.[[6]](#footnote-6)

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.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves, especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.[[8]](#footnote-8)

5. Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of 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]](#footnote-9) should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.

COMMENTARY

***Chapter Two***

***The Way of Life***

*4. The second chapter of the rule is a thorough and detailed description of the Secular Franciscan way of life. The first part (#4 - #6) gives the meaning of gospel living in the Franciscan tradition. Then conversion and worship are explained as the necessary preconditions for achieving this gospel life (#7 - #8). Finally, paragraphs #9 - #19 describe the manner of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ by how the Secular Franciscans live (#10 - #14) and what they do (#15 - #19). In the light of scripture and the teachings of Vatican II, this chapter is envisioned as a program for the evangelization: how we ourselves are evangelized after the manner of Francis and secondly how we evangelize others.*

*Paragraph #4 summarises the heart of the rule: the very core of gospel life is intimate union with Christ, or in the words of St. Paul. “The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me” (Gal. 3:20) and so, the Secular Franciscan, alive with the spirit of Francis, knows and experiences the Lord Jesus intensely, binding one’s own person with the person of Christ.*

*5. As this process develops, then the Secular Franciscan seeks out the living and* active *person of Christ in all spheres of life: liturgical activity (especially the Eucharist), Scripture, Church, one another (#5). Since the sacrificial union with Christ in the Eucharist is* ***the*** *most intense and comprehensive experience of his real presence, this celebration becomes the key encounter as patterned by Francis himself.*

Note: “**the**” here in No. 5 of the Commentary is deliberately in bold to emphasise Eucharist is the encounter with Jesus above all others. This odd bold “**the**” occurs again in the Commentary No. 20, and in Commentary No. 24.

TEXT OF THE RULE

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 creativity.[[10]](#footnote-10)

7. United by their vocation as “*brothers and sisters of penance*,”[[11]](#footnote-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 daily.[[12]](#footnote-12)

On this road to renewal, the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.[[13]](#footnote-13)

*COMMENTARY*

*6. Sharing Christ’s mission through life in the Church is the third point developed on the meaning of gospel living (#6). By word and example, the Secular Franciscans bring to those around them the living Christ they have experienced. As it were, they become a living gospel for all to read. This evangelisation is based on obedience to the Holy Spirit, who inspires and forms the Church, the body of Christ. So, the Secular Franciscans foster an openness to the Spirit and creatively exercise their mission. Furthermore, they hear the call of the Spirit through loyalty, frank dialogue, and cooperation with the legitimate Church authority. This obedience makes ministry authentic and consistent without stifling their creativity.*

*7. The next section of the rule (#7 and #8) explains the personal disposition or personal or preconditions (viz., conversion and worship) necessary for achieving the union with Jesus Christ and with one’s neighbour described above.*

*An ongoing change of heart or a continual spiritual renewal is the first condition (#7) for modelling one’s own thoughts and deeds on those of Christ. As Francis himself points out in his letter used as the prologue, if we love the Lord with all we are, (cf. Exhortation: opening paragraph) build a Eucharistic community and remove those things that prevent such union, we become one with him, fulfil the Father’s will and project his image onto the world. Thus, our daily conversion becomes a primary means for putting on Christ and conforming ourselves to him. The sacrament of reconciliation, then, is a privileged means and practical assistance for achieving this objective.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

8. As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.[[14]](#footnote-14) 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 family.[[15]](#footnote-15) The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.[[16]](#footnote-16)

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.[[17]](#footnote-17) Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.[[18]](#footnote-18)

*COMMENTARY*

*8. The other precondition is to make worship of the Father as central in our own lives as it was in Christ’s. The Secular Franciscan then communicates and unites with the Lord through the sacraments (again especially the Eucharist), the liturgy of the hours, contemplation and any other expression of prayer.*

*9. The description of the way of life now moves to the manner of proclaiming the gospel every day by lifestyle (#10 - #14) and ministry or apostolic activity (#15 - #19).*

*First of all, Mary’s self-giving and prayer are set up as the primary example of gospel living. Devotion to her has always been a hallmark of the Franciscan calling, both as a way of expressing love for her and as an important way of finding Jesus himself.*

*10. The first phase of evangelizing shows how the Secular Franciscans live in this world (#10 - #12). Those who go “from gospel to life” have simple living (#10 - #12), an experience of togetherness (#13) and selfless service (#14) as qualities of everyday living.*

*Simple living begins with the choice to unite with Christ so intensely that one is willing to share even his passion: the burdens of hardship and pain within oneself or from outside sources.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

11. Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life,[[19]](#footnote-19) even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel, they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God’s children. Thus, in the spirit of “the Beatitudes,” and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father,[[20]](#footnote-20) they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

12. Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.[[21]](#footnote-21)

13. As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters,[[22]](#footnote-22) so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord[[23]](#footnote-23) and an image of Christ.

A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.[[24]](#footnote-24)

COMMENTARY.

*11. Simple living also takes shape (#11) by reducing material needs, by curbing a thirst for possessions and the domineering power that comes from ownership, and by using all God’s gifts in a spirit of generosity, justice, and moderation. Gospel poverty for Secular Franciscans, then, consists in acquiring possessions justly, keeping needs to a minimum and using what they have as custodians for the generous benefit of others. In this way, they live for the kingdom of God and not for this world according to the charter for happiness given in the “Beatitudes.”*

*12. The result of simple living in gospel poverty is freedom to seek and share the great treasure of the kingdom: loving God and neighbour (#12).*

*13. Hand in hand with simple living is coming to recognise that in Christ, all are equally brothers and sisters (#13). There is no room for prejudice or exclusiveness in the Franciscan way of life. In fact, the sense of community and the will toward community compel the Secular Franciscans to discover Christ in everyone, especially the lowly and poor and disadvantaged.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

14. Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself,” let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.[[25]](#footnote-25)

15. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.[[26]](#footnote-26)

*COMMENTARY*

*14. The natural consequence to simple living and a sense of community is selfless service (#14). Secular Franciscans expend themselves by using their special talents, competence, and responsibility. Thus they bring to others the experience of God and the hope for achieving their full humanity.*

*15. The second grouping (#15 - #19) of the ways Secular Franciscans spread the gospel and witness to Jesus Christ deals with concrete action. Not only does gospel living take shape in a special lifestyle, but also it expresses itself in a specific mode of apostolic activity or ministry.*

*The first particular aspect of the Secular Franciscans’ evangelical action is social justice (#15), both on the individual level and on the level of community participation. They must show justice themselves and motivate justice in others, not just in their private lives, but also in the public forum of politics, business, economics, and the like. This mandate for advancing social justice as an organised group overturns previous prohibitions against a common public expression of rights when it is carried out as a means of demonstrating the convictions of faith.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

16. Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.[[27]](#footnote-27)

17. In their family, they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ.[[28]](#footnote-28)

By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives, in particular, should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.[[29]](#footnote-29)

*COMMENTARY*

*16. Another concrete means of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ is expressed in attitudes toward work (#16). Through working, the Secular Franciscans discover their workaday world as the arena of their salvation and at the same time exemplify the saving Christ to others. So, human labour is a blessing, both received and bestowed. By working, a person shares in the creative power of the Father renews the face of the earth along with the Son and brings the love of the Holy Spirit to the human community. Such an attitude toward work can reshape one’s own and others’ values and actions regarding labour and management, business and economics, living wage and welfare, proper use of one’s own talents and the resources of others.*

*17. A third apostolic expression of gospel living concerns family life (#17). The family is the God-given basic unit of human society and a miniature of the total world already redeemed by Christ. Hence, Franciscan – oriented families present a renewed world of love and dignity, are an example of Christ’s love for his Church and reflect the light of Christ in affront to the darkness of today’s shattered families and prevailing godless values. Husbands and wives, then, have a special ministry in the Church to the world. This ministry is exercised in two ways: by leading and educating their children to experience Christ and by witnessing to others that God is present in the family. This Christian family living is one of the most particular expressions of the laity’s life and mission in the Church.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

18. Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High,”[[30]](#footnote-30) and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

19. Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.[[31]](#footnote-31)

Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others.[[32]](#footnote-32)

Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.[[33]](#footnote-33)

*COMMENTARY*

*18. Ecology (the relationship of creatures with themselves, their environment and their God) is a fourth expression of the Franciscan apostolate (#18). Francis saw all creation – the sun and moon, the weather and water, fire and earth, forgiving people and death itself – as symbols of the union between God and his people. Hence, all creation has a sacred quality and enjoys a oneness with people in the history of salvation. Following the example of Francis, the Secular Franciscans express a profound respect for all creation and use it for its intended God-given purpose. Furthermore, they ennoble nature and technology and build a community conscience toward using natural resources. This ministry toward creation will stem the selfish tide of abuse and waste and exploitation in this world.*

*19. A particularly Franciscan ministry is peace-making (#19). Peace grows out of the search for personal integrity and harmony with others and the discovery of God’s presence everywhere. It is built up by affirming oneself, seeing others as revealers of God’s love, taking a positive approach to solutions, and constantly communicating with the Lord. It is putting aside all thought of violence and embracing a largeness of heart. The result of peace is joy and hope. A special application of this ministry of peace-making is preparation for death at which time a person arrives at that ultimate encounter with God and an eternal peace in his presence that fulfil the earthly quest for peace.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

**Chapter Three**

**Life in Fraternity**

20. The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels – local, regional, National and International. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church.[[34]](#footnote-34) These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the Constitutions.

*COMMENTARY*

***Chapter Three***

***Life in Fraternity***

*20. Ordinarily, the gospel life of Secular Franciscans outlined in the second chapter is developed and sustained within the framework of an organised community, called a fraternity, in each locality. (Hence “fraternity” is the topic of chapter three (#20 - #26). These fraternities are living and active communities. They serve as expressions of loving and trusting relationships between members and as a legal unit of government. They exist on various levels and have their own special character (#20). They are given life and direction by their lay leadership and particular characteristics by their local needs (#21). They exist with the approval of the Church (#22) and are nurtured by new members who have been prepared for commitment (#23). Their meetings and contributions express their will to, and sense of community, (#24 - #25). Their spiritual growth is developed through the assistance of clergy and religious (#26).*

*The chapter begins with outlining fraternity as* ***the*** *characteristic of all Secular Franciscan groupings, whether local, regional, provincial, National, or International (#20). A new dimension given to Secular Franciscan life because of this paragraph is an awareness of (and, hence, a mandate to achieve) a fraternity spirit and style operating on levels beyond that of the local fraternity. Regional, provincial, National, or International groupings are not just a federation of independent, semi-autonomous fraternities or a forum for exchange, but actually a fully operating community with its own character, interactivity, and authority as defined by the Statutes.*

**Note:** “**the**” here in Commentary No. 20 is deliberately in bold to emphasise that “Fraternity is the characteristic” of the Secular Franciscan Order. This bold “**the**” is also found in Commentary No. 5 and also in Commentary No. 24.

TEXT OF THE RULE

21. On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a Council and Minister (or President) who are elected by the professed according to the Constitutions.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Their service, which lasts for a definite period, is marked by a ready and willing spirit and is a duty of responsibility to each member and to the community.

Within themselves, the fraternities are structured in different ways according to the norm of the Constitutions, according to the various needs of their members and their regions and under the guidance of their respective Council.

22. The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order, and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.[[36]](#footnote-36)

COMMENTARY

*21. This fraternity is bound together with the leadership of a Minister and a Council who are ready and willing to serve, and it is expressed in diversified ways according to the needs of the area (#21). Two implications ensure from the first part of this paragraph: the importance of choosing available, competent and willing leaders and, secondly, the responsibility of Secular Franciscans themselves to exercise complete control in administrative and temporal matters. The stress on diversified fraternity styles implies that the structure of the community must be tailored to the needs of those who form it.*

*22. The local fraternity is the basic living organism of the whole Secular Franciscan Order and a visible sign of the whole Church in miniature (#22). Hence, its beginning and development is guided by Church authority, for it is the centre for spiritual growth, apostolic out-reach and loving union among members. This paragraph calls the members to relate with one another more personally and intensely and stresses the ties with the local bishop.*

TEXT OF THE RULE

23. Requests for admission to the Secular Franciscan Order must be presented to the local fraternity, whose Council decides upon the acceptance of new brothers and sisters.[[37]](#footnote-37)

Admission into the Order is gradually attained through a time of initiation, a period of formation of at least one year, and profession of the rule.[[38]](#footnote-38) The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living. The age for profession and the distinctive Franciscan sign[[39]](#footnote-39) are regulated by the Statutes.

Profession, by its nature is a permanent commitment.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the Council in fraternal dialogue.

Withdrawal or permanent dismissal from the Order, if necessary, is an act of the fraternity Council according to the norm of the Constitutions.[[41]](#footnote-41)

24. To foster communion among members, the Council should organise regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity.[[42]](#footnote-42) This communion continues with deceased brothers and sisters through prayer for them.[[43]](#footnote-43)

*COMMENTARY*

*23. Paragraph #23 points out the importance of the initial orientation, with elements of both instruction and experience directed toward a lifetime commitment in the Order. It also stresses the role of the Council in the development of community, especially for new members and for errant members. A number of important implications develop from this paragraph; it is the responsibility of primarily the Council (not just the Minister or the Spiritual Assistant) to lead new members to commitment and exercise charity in particular difficulties. The life of the whole fraternity contributes to the growth of the new members and consolidates it. Furthermore, profession is highlighted as a mature and enduring decision to participate as fully as possible in the Church’s life and mission according to the manner of Francis.*

*24. Paragraph #24 discusses the means to express a strong and lasting fraternity spirit. The regular and frequent meeting (ordinarily once a month) is* ***the*** *way to build fraternity with prayer, education, apostolic activity, dialogue, and leisure. Continuing education in Franciscanism and Church life is also stressed as a means of spiritual growth and community building. Again, it is emphasised that the fraternity derives much of its life from a vigorous Council; hence, the Council should meet regularly to take care of ordinary business, foster gospel living and show concern for the growth of all its members.*

**Note:** “**the**” here in No. 24 of the Commentary is deliberately in bold to emphasise that regular meetings are the place to build fraternity. It suggests that fraternity a privileged place of encounter with each other (and with Jesus.) This odd bold “**the**” is also found in Commentary No. 5 and Commentary No. 20.

THE TEXT OF THE RULE

25. Regarding expenses necessary for the life of the fraternity and the needs of worship, of the apostolate, and of charity, all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local Fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity Councils.[[44]](#footnote-44)

26. As a concrete sign of communion and co-responsibility, the Councils on various levels, in keeping with the Constitutions, shall ask for suitable and well-prepared religious for spiritual assistance. They should make this request to the superiors of the four religious Franciscan families, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.

To promote fidelity to the charism as well as observance of the rule and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity, the Minister or President, with the consent of the Council, should take care to ask for a regular pastoral visit by the competent religious superiors[[45]](#footnote-45) as well as for a fraternal visit from those of the higher fraternities, according to the norm of the Constitutions.

***“May whoever observes all this***

***be filled in heaven***

***with the blessing of the most high Father,***

***and on earth with that of his beloved Son,***

***together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.”***

(Blessing of St. Francis from the Testament)

*COMMENTARY*

*25. Paragraph #25 points out the voluntary contributions of the members finance the fraternity’s spiritual and temporal needs and activities. The fraternity, according to its means and agreed-upon arrangements, also contributes to the support of the regional, provincial, National, and International fraternities. This paragraph is a contemporary application of the traditional Secular Franciscan values outlined in the very first rule that the members are responsible for taking care of their own in whatever way is necessary.*

*26. Finally, the rule speaks of the spiritual assistance of the clergy; it also refers to the need of the friars to share fellowship and their Franciscan vocation with the Secular Franciscans (#26). Three important implications are drawn from this paragraph. First of all, since the Secular Franciscan Order is basically a lay order, the laity themselves are primarily responsible for their own spiritual growth and have the duty to get the proper assistance to achieve this end. Secondly, Spiritual Assistants should have a good background in Franciscanism and Vatican Council II (especially the role of the laity) and a willingness to share their own vocation with the Secular Franciscan community.*

*Thirdly, the official visit to the fraternity is given a dual role: Spiritual growth is ensured through pastoral visitation by a Franciscan friar. Organisational development is provided by the fraternal visitation of a higher lay leader.*

**GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS**

**OF THE**

**SECULAR FRANCISCAN** **ORDER**

December 8, 2000

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**DECREE OF APPROVAL**

**OF THE GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS**

CONGREGATION

FOR THE INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE

AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE

**Prot. N. T. 144-1/2000**

**DECREE**

The Conference of General Ministers of the Franciscan First Order and Third Order Regular has presented to the Apostolic See for approval, the text of the Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, previously approved by the General Chapter of the same Secular Franciscan Order, celebrated in the month of October 1999.

After careful examination of the above-mentioned text of the Constitutions, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life, by this present Decree *approves and confirms the text* according to the copy written in Italian, conserved in its Archives, all requirements of law being observed.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the Vatican, December 8, 2000,

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Eduardo Card. Martínez Somalo

Prefect

Piergiorgio Silvano Nesti, C.P.

Secretary

Note: The words: “Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.” means this approved document is binding and invalidates any act or statement or decree not made by this authority.

**LETTER OF THE CONFERENCE**

**OF GENERAL MINISTERS**

**OF THE FIRST ORDER AND THE T.O.R.**

Rome, January 1, 2001. Feast of Mary, Mother of God.

Dear Sister Emanuela, the Lord give you peace!

The Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life has on December 8, 2000, issued the Decree (Prot. N. T. 144-1/2000) of approval of the General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, as revised by the General Chapter of the OFS at Madrid in October 1999, and subsequently submitted by the President of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the T.O.R.

Now, also in name of the other General Ministers, I am entrusting the approved text of the Constitutions to you, and through you, to all brothers and sisters of the OFS. The common vocation of the whole Franciscan family, from its very beginning in the overpowering spiritual experience of Francis and Clare, is “to live according to the form of the Holy Gospel.”

The Constitutions reveal themselves to be an ever more important help to incarnate this one vocation in the rich variety of its manifold expressions, wherever and whenever the Lord sends us. They are not just “one more document” or the final stage of a journey, but an essential and dynamic instrument helping us to delineate our identity and to structure our life and our vocation progressively as Franciscans.

The work of reflection and revision by so many brothers and sisters all over the world and the approval by holy mother Church, commit us to make these Constitutions the central axis of our life’s project according to the gospel.

In name of the Church and of the General Ministers, I express this wish to all Secular Franciscans; that you may be convincing witnesses of the evangelic fire which inflamed the whole existence of Francis and Clare of Assisi, and made them models of a fully given and thus completely realised life.

Your brother,

Giacomo Bini, ofm

President of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR.

**PROMULGATION OF THE**

**GENERAL CONSTITUTIONS**

Rome, 6th February 2001.

Circ. 21/96-02

To the National Councils of the OFS

To the International Councillors of the OFS

**Object:** Promulgation of the amended General Constitutions approved by the Decree of the Congregation for ICLSAL on the 8th of December 2000.

Dear brothers and sisters,

The General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, intended to apply the renewed Rule of 1978, were approved by the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life through the Decree of the 8th of September 1990, for six years to be tried out. Before the end of this period, the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, through the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and T.O.R., asked for an extension of the time of trial, taking into account the time necessary to translate the Constitutions into the other official languages of the International Fraternity and, then, into the languages of each country. The Congregation acceded to the request and conceded an extension of three years.

During this time, the Constitutions have been studied and put into practice by the Fraternities of the OFS on all levels and, little by little, have marked them with the characteristics of the *secularity, unity, and autonomy* of our Order. Not all has been easy, and some aspects have still to be assimilated fully in order that, at the dawn of the Third Millennium, the OFS should really become “an army that can be in the vanguard in the Church and in the world to build a more human and Christian society” as Cardinal Hamer, Prefect of the Congregation for ICLSAL wished in 1990. The experience gained has shown the substantial validity of the General Constitutions of 1990, and only some aspects required revision. The work which had to be done was started in time by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS and was carried out through ample consultation involving all the National Fraternities and International Counsellors as well as the Presidency itself and some experts belonging to the OFS or assigned by the Franciscan General Ministers. In the General Chapter of Madrid (23-31st October 1999) a text was proposed that gathered and co-ordinated the suggestions and petitions received and also presented alternative proposals when there was no possibility of finding an univocal formulation from among those that the National Fraternities had expressed. The text presented to the Chapter was inspired by the following criteria:

* adhesion to the common law and the law proper to the OFS,
* respect for the text approved in 1990 by the Holy See,
* organisational flexibility,
* cultural and linguistic adaptability.

The General Chapter has attentively and profoundly examined the text presented, together with the oral and written interventions made during the work of the Chapter.

The result of the discussions and votes cast, article by article and on each of the amendments, was presented on the 21st of December, 1999 to the Conference of the Franciscan General Ministers who, after a final revision by experts in canon law of the four Curia’s, forwarded the text on the 1st of August 2000 to the Congregation for ICLSAL for approval. The Congregation has approved the text by the decree bearing the date of the 8th of December 2000, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

And now, brothers and sisters of the OFS, on the 6th of February 2001, the approved General Constitutions are promulgated and consequently should be observed from 6th of March 2001. It rests on each one of us to ensure that they are “spirit and life”, an instrument of consolidation and growth of our Order so that with full sail (“*Duc in altum*”), we can go on with hope, according to the exhortation given by the Holy Father to all Christians with the Apostolic Letter “*Novo Millenio ineunte*” at the end of the Great Jubilee of 2000. We also, Secular Franciscans, are called to be witnesses, that is to say, martyrs for Christ, in the original meaning of the word, during the new millennium.

It wasn’t by chance that we chose the date of the 6th February for the promulgation of the amended General Constitutions. On this date, we commemorate the Proto-martyrs of Japan, witnesses per excellence, with 17 Franciscan Tertiaries crucified in Nagasaki, along with Peter Baptist, Paul Miki, and their other companions. We know very little about these distant brothers of ours, apart from their unwavering will to remain firm in faith, to continue witnessing to the Gospel by their very lives, whatever the cost.

During the past century, there have also been Secular Franciscans who have manifested, with the sacrifice of their lives, their fidelity to baptism and resistance to evil, anchored in the faith. We remember our brother Ceferino Giménez Malla, a victim of the persecution of religion during the Spanish civil war (1936 – 1939), who was beatified on the 4th of May, 1997. We remember the Servant of God Frantisek Nosek, a politician from Bohemia and a secular Franciscan, another victim of communist violence. We also remember Juvénal Kabera, Minister of the OFS Fraternity of Kigali, assassinated during the massacres of the tribal wars in Rwanda. These are only some examples, but for them also the recent words of the Holy Father remain true: “It has been thanks especially to the brave witness of lay faithful, not seldom to the point of martyrdom, that the faith has not disappeared from the lives of entire peoples.”

Perhaps we will not be asked to give witness by shedding our blood, but we will certainly be asked to give witness by being coherent and firm in the fulfilment of our baptismal promises, renewed and re-affirmed through profession in the OFS. In virtue of our Profession, the Rule and the application that the General Constitutions make of it represent for each one of us the point of reference for daily experience, beginning with a specific vocation and precise identity. On this basis we need to re-shape our existence and find a project of life (Franciscan evangelical radicalism) and a place of Church communion (the Fraternity), in which it should be possible for us to “learn the purpose and the way of living, loving and suffering” (Const., art 10).

With this desire, the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, having received the approved General Constitutions, transmits them to the whole Order so that, as with the Rule, they be studied, loved, and lived.

Emanuela De Nunzio

Minister General of the OFS

**CHAPTER 1**

**THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

NB: References to the Rule at the beginning of Articles means refer to the Rule. Originally these were Marginal Notes not part of the text.

**Article 1**

1. All the faithful are called to holiness and have a right to follow their own spiritual way in communion with the Church.[[46]](#footnote-46)

2. *Rule 1.* There are many spiritual families in the Church with different charisms. Among these families, the Franciscan Family, which in its various branches recognises St. Francis of Assisi as its father, inspiration, and model, must be included.

3. *Rule 2.* From the beginning, the Secular Franciscan Order[[47]](#footnote-47) 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.[[48]](#footnote-48)

4. The Holy See has entrusted the pastoral care and spiritual assistance of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS), because it belongs to the same spiritual family, to the Franciscan First Order and Third Order Regular (TOR). These are the “Institutes” who are responsible for the *altius moderamen*, referred to by Canon 303 of the Code of Canon Law.[[49]](#footnote-49)

5. The Secular Franciscan Order is a public association in the Church.[[50]](#footnote-50) It is divided into fraternities at various levels; local, regional, National, and International. Each one has its own juridical personality within the Church.

**Article 2**

1. The vocation to the OFS is a specific vocation that gives form to the life and apostolic activity of its members. Therefore, those who are bound by a perpetual commitment to another religious family or institute of consecrated life cannot belong to the OFS.

2. The OFS is open to the faithful of every state of life.

The following may belong to it:

* + the laity (men and women);
  + the secular clergy (deacons, priests, bishops).

**Article 3**

1. The secular state characterises the spirituality and the apostolic life of those belonging to the OFS.

2. Their secularity, with respect to vocation and to apostolic life, expresses itself according to their respective state, that is:

* for the laity, contributing to building up the Kingdom of

God by their presence in their life-situations and in their temporal activities,[[51]](#footnote-51)

* for the secular clergy, by offering to the people of God

the service which is properly theirs, in communion with the bishop and the presbytery.[[52]](#footnote-52)

Both are inspired by the gospel options of Saint Francis of Assisi, committing themselves to continue his mission with the other components of the Franciscan Family.

3. The vocation to the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose, the members of the OFS gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities.

**Article 4**

1. The OFS is governed by the universal law of the Church and by its own: the Rule, the Constitutions, the Ritual, and the particular Statutes.

2. The Rule establishes the nature, purpose, and spirit of the OFS.

3. *Rule 3.* The Constitutions have as their purpose:

- to apply the Rule;

- to indicate concretely the conditions for belonging to the OFS, its government, the organisation of life in fraternity and its seat.[[53]](#footnote-53)

**Article 5**

1. *Rule 3.* The authentic interpretation of the Rule and of the Constitutions belongs to the Holy See.

2. The practical interpretation of the Constitutions with the purpose of harmonizing its application in different areas and at the various levels of the Order belongs to the General Chapter of the OFS.

3. The clarification of specific points which require a timely decision is the competence of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS). Such a clarification is valid until the next General Chapter.

**Article 6**

1. The International Fraternity of the OFS has its own Statutes approved by the General Chapter.

2. National Fraternities have their own Statutes approved by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.

3. The Regional and the Local Fraternities may have their own Statutes approved by the Council of the higher level.

**Article 7**

All regulations not in accordance with the present Constitutions, are abrogated.

**CHAPTER II**

**FORM OF LIFE AND APOSTOLIC ACTIVITY**

**Title I**

**THE FORM OF LIFE**

**Article 8**

1. The Secular Franciscans commit themselves by their profession to live the Gospel according to Franciscan Spirituality in their secular condition.

2. They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:

*- Rule 7.* in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation;

*- Rule 4. Par. 3.* open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church’s life situation, “going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel”;

in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.

**Article 9**

1. *Rule 5.* The spirituality of the Secular Franciscan is a plan of life centred on the person and on the following of Christ,[[54]](#footnote-54) rather than a detailed program to be put into practice.

2. *Rule 4. Par. 3.* The Secular Franciscan committed to following the example and the teachings of Christ, must personally and assiduously study the Gospel and Sacred Scripture. The fraternity and its leaders should foster love for the Word of the Gospel and help the brothers and sisters to know and understand it as it is proclaimed by the Church with the assistance of the Spirit.[[55]](#footnote-55)

**Article 10**

*Rule 10.* “Christ, poor and crucified,” victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the “book” in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him, they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.

**Article 11**

Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to His inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things “the Spirit of God at work within them.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

**Article 12**

1. Gaining inspiration from the example and the writings of Francis and above all, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, each day the brothers and sisters faithfully live the great gift which Christ has given: the revelation of the Father. They should bear witness to this faith before all.

- in their family life;

- in their work;

- in their joys and sufferings;

- in their associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father;

- in their presence and participation in the life of the society;

- in their fraternal relationships with all creatures.

2 *Rule 10.* With Jesus, obedient even to death, they should seek to know and do the will of the Father. They should give thanks to God for the gift of freedom and for the revelation of the law of love. In order to carry out the will of the Father, they should accept the help which is offered to them through the mediation of the Church by those who are constituted as authority in her and by their confreres. They should take on the risk of courageous choices in their life in society with decisiveness and serenity.

3. *Rule 8.* The brothers and sisters should love meeting God as His children, and they should let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. They should seek to discover the presence of the Father in their own heart, in nature and in the history of humanity in which His plan of salvation is fulfilled. The contemplation of this mystery will dispose them to collaborate in this loving plan.

**Article 13**

1. *Rule 7.* Secular Franciscans, called in earlier times “The Brothers and Sisters of Penance,” propose to live in the spirit of continual conversion. Some means to cultivate this characteristic of the Franciscan vocation, individually and in fraternity, are: listening to and celebrating the Word of God; review of life; spiritual retreats; the help of a spiritual adviser, and penitential celebrations. They should approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation frequently and participate in the communal celebration of it, whether in the fraternity or with the whole people of God.[[57]](#footnote-57)

2. In this spirit of conversion, they should live out their love for the renewal of the Church, which should be accompanied by personal and communal renewal. The fruits of conversion, which is a response to the love of God, are the works of charity in the interactions with the brothers and sisters.[[58]](#footnote-58)

3. Traditional among Franciscan penitents, penitential practices such as fasting and abstinence should be known, appreciated, and lived out according to the general guidelines of the Church.

**Article 14**

1. Aware that God wanted to make of us all a single people and that he made his Church the universal sacrament of salvation, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to a faith-inspired reflection on the Church, its mission in today’s world and the role of the Franciscan laity within it. They should take up the challenges and accept the responsibilities that this reflection will lead them to discover.

2. *Rule 8.* The Eucharist is the centre of the life of the Church. Christ unites us to himself and to one another as a single body in it. Therefore, the Eucharist should be the centre of the life of the fraternity. The brothers and sisters should participate in the Eucharist as frequently as possible, being mindful of the respect and love shown by Francis, who, in the Eucharist, lived all the mysteries of the life of Christ.

3. They should participate in the sacraments of the Church, attentive not only to personal sanctification but also to fostering the growth of the Church and the spreading of the Kingdom. They should collaborate in achieving living and conscious celebrations in their own parishes, particularly in the celebrations of baptism, confirmation, marriage, and the anointing of the sick.

4. The brothers and sisters, as well as the fraternities, should adhere to the indications of the Ritual with respect to the different forms of participating in the liturgical prayer of the Church, giving priority to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours.[[59]](#footnote-59)

5. In all places and at all times, it is possible for true worshippers of the Father to give him adoration and to pray to him. Nevertheless, the brothers and sisters should try to find times of silence and recollection dedicated exclusively to prayer.

**Article 15**

1. *Rule 11.* Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.

2. Secular Franciscans, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church and the demands of society.

3. Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners.

They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

4. They should love and practice purity of heart, the source of true fraternity.

**Article 16**

1. *Rule 9*. Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realised in her.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most Holy Virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.

2. Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community.

Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.[[61]](#footnote-61)

**Title II**

**ACTIVE PRESENCE IN THE CHURCH**

**AND IN THE WORLD**

**Article 17**

1. *Rule 6. Called* to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made “witnesses and instruments of her mission” Secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate in personal witness[[62]](#footnote-62) in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.

2. The preparation of the brothers and sisters for spreading the Gospel message “in the ordinary circumstances of the world”[[63]](#footnote-63) and for collaborating in the catechesis within the ecclesial communities should be promoted in the fraternities.

3. Those who are called to carry out the mission of catechists, presiders of ecclesial communities, or other ministries, as well as the sacred Ministers, should make the love of Francis for the Word of God their own, as well as his faith in those who announce it, and the great fervour with which he received the mission of preaching penance from the Pope.

4. Participation in the service of sanctification, which the Church exercises through the liturgy, prayer, and works of penance and charity, is put into practice by the brothers and sisters above all in their own family, then in the fraternity and finally through their active presence in the local Church and in society.

**For a Just and Fraternal Society**

**Article 18**

1. Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of Saint Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities.[[64]](#footnote-64)

2. *Rule 13.* They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.

3. *Rule 13.* They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to “create worthy conditions of life” for all and to work for the freedom of all people.

4. Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person.

**Article 19**

1. *Rule 14.* Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations.

2. In the spirit of minority, they should opt for relationships which give preference to the poor and to those on the fringe of society, whether these be individuals or categories of persons or an entire people; they should collaborate in overcoming the exclusions of others and those forms of poverty that are the fruit of inefficiency and injustice.

**Article 20**

1. *Rule 14.* Secular Franciscans, committed by their vocation to build the Kingdom of God in temporal situations and activities, live their membership both in the Church and in society as an inseparable reality.

2. As the primary and fundamental contribution to building a more just and fraternal world, they should commit themselves both to the generous fulfilment of the duties proper to their occupation and to the professional training that pertains to it. With the same spirit of service, they should assume their social and civil responsibilities.

**Article 21**

1. *Rule 16.* For Francis, work is a gift, and to work is a grace. Daily work is not only the means of livelihood but the opportunity to serve God and neighbour as well as a way to develop one’s own personality. In the conviction that work is a right and a duty and that every form of occupation deserves respect, the brothers and sisters should commit themselves to collaborate so that all persons may have the possibility to work and so that working conditions may always be more humane.

2. Leisure and recreation have their own value and are necessary for personal development. Secular Franciscans should maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to create meaningful forms of using leisure time.[[65]](#footnote-65)

**Article 22**

1. *Rule 15.* Secular Franciscans should “be in the forefront ... in the field of public life.” They should collaborate as much as possible for the passage of just laws and ordinances.

2. The fraternities should engage themselves through courageous initiatives, consistent with their Franciscan vocation and with the directives of the Church, in the field of human development and justice. They should take clear positions whenever human dignity is attacked by any form of oppression or indifference. They should offer their fraternal service to the victims of injustice.

3. The renunciation of the use of violence, characteristic of the followers of Francis, does not mean the renunciation of action. However, the brothers and sisters should take care that their interventions are always inspired by Christian love.

**Article 23**

1. *Rule 19.* Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love.[[66]](#footnote-66) Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:

- they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;

- they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, individually and as a fraternity, with initiatives of the Pope, the local Churches, and the Franciscan Family;

- they should collaborate with those movements and institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.

2. While acknowledging both the personal and National right to legitimate defence, they should respect the choice of those who, because of conscientious objection, refuse to bear arms.

3. To preserve peace in the family, the brothers and sisters should, in due time, make a last will and testament for the disposition of their goods.

**In the Family**

**Article 24**

1. *Rule 17.* Secular Franciscans should consider their own family to be the first place in which to live their Christian commitment and Franciscan vocation. They should make space within it for prayer, for the Word of God and for Christian catechesis. They should concern themselves with respect for all life in every situation from conception until death.

Married couples find in the Rule of the OFS an effective aid in their own journey of Christian life, aware that, in the sacrament of matrimony, their love shares in the love that Christ has for his Church. The way spouses love each other and affirm the value of fidelity is a profound witness for their own family, the Church, and the world.

2. In the Fraternity:

- the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for dialogue and for the sharing of experiences;

- they should share the important moments of the family life of their Franciscan brothers and sisters, and they should give fraternal attention to those – single, widows, single parents, separated, divorced – who are living difficult situations;

*- Rule 19.* they should create conditions suitable for dialogue between generations;

- the formation of groups of married couples and of family groups should be fostered.

3. The brothers and sisters should collaborate with the efforts undertaken in the Church and in society to affirm both the value of fidelity and respect for life and to provide answers to the social problems of the family.

**Article 25**

Out of the conviction of the need to educate children to take an interest in community, “bringing them the awareness of being living, active members of the People of God,”[[67]](#footnote-67) and because of the fascination which Francis can exercise on them, the formation of groups of children should be encouraged. With the help of a pedagogy and an organisation suitable to their age, these children should be initiated into a knowledge and love of the Franciscan life. National Statutes will give appropriate orientation to the organisation of these groups and their relationship to the fraternity and to Franciscan youth groups.

**Messengers of Joy and Hope**

**Article 26**

1. Even in suffering, Francis experienced confidence and joy from:

- the experience of the fatherhood of God;

- the invincible faith of rising with Christ to eternal life;

- the experience of being able to meet and praise the Creator in the universal fraternity of all creatures.[[68]](#footnote-68)

*Rule 19.* Following the Gospel, Secular Franciscans, therefore, affirm their hope and their joy in living. They make a contribution to counter widespread distress and pessimism, preparing a better future.

2. In the fraternity, the brothers and sisters should promote mutual understanding, and they should see to it that the atmosphere of their meetings is welcoming and that it reflects joy. They should encourage one another for the good.

**Article 27**

1. *Rule 19.* The brothers and sisters, progressing in age, should learn to accept illness and increasing difficulties and to give a deeper sense to their life. This should be undertaken with increasing detachment as they set out for the Promised Land. They should be firmly convinced that the community of those who believe in Christ and who love one another in him will go forward into eternal life as the “communion of saints.”

2. Secular Franciscans should commit themselves to create in their environment and above all, in their fraternities, a climate of faith and hope so that “Sister Death” may be regarded as a passage to the Father, and all may prepare themselves with serenity.

**CHAPTER III**

**LIFE IN FRATERNITY**

**Title 1**

**GENERAL ORIENTATIONS**

**Article 28**

1. The fraternity of the OFS finds its origin in the inspiration of Saint Francis of Assisi to whom the Most High revealed the essential gospel quality of life in fraternal communion.[[69]](#footnote-69)

2. *Rule 20.* “The OFS is divided into fraternities of various levels,” the purpose being to promote in an orderly form, the union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters and their active and communal presence in both the local and the universal Church. The OFS shall also support the commitment of the fraternities in their service to the world, and specifically to the life of society.

3. The brothers and sisters gather in Local Fraternities established in connection with a church or a religious house, or in personal fraternities, constituted for specific and valid reasons recognised in the decree of establishment.[[70]](#footnote-70)

**Article 29**

1. Local Fraternities are grouped into fraternities at various levels: regional, National, and International according to criteria that are ecclesial, territorial, or of another nature. They are co-ordinated and connected according to the norm of the Rule and the Constitutions. This is a requirement of the communion among the fraternities, of the orderly collaboration among them, and of the unity of the OFS.

2. *Rule 20.* These Fraternities that each have their own juridical personality in the Church should acquire, if possible, a civil juridical personality for the better fulfilment of their mission. It pertains to the National Councils to give guidelines concerning the motivations and the procedures to be followed.

3. National Statutes should indicate the criteria for the organisation of the OFS in the nation. The application of these criteria is left to the prudent judgement of the leaders of the fraternities concerned and of the National Council.

**Article 30**

1. The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong and for the OFS as the organic union of all fraternities throughout the world.

2. The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one’s situation and possible obligations for the animation of the fraternity.

3. *Rule 25.* In a family spirit, each brother and sister should make a contribution to the fraternity fund, according to each one’s means, to provide the financial means needed for the life of the fraternity and for its religious, apostolic and charitable works. The brothers and sisters ought to provide the means necessary for supporting the activities and the operations of the fraternities at higher levels, both by their financial assistance and by their contributions in other areas as well.

**Article 31**

1. *Rule 21.* On various levels, each Fraternity is animated and guided by a Council and Minister (or President). These offices are conferred through elections, in accordance with the Rule, the Constitutions, and their own Statutes. Only by way of exception or in the first phase of their establishment may fraternities exist without a regular Council. The Council of the higher level will make the arrangements necessary for this inadequate situation only for the specific amount of time it takes to get a fraternity back on sure footing or to establish a new fraternity; to give its leaders the proper formation and to carry out the elections.

2. The office of Minister or Councillor is a fraternal service, a commitment to hold oneself available and responsible in relation to each brother and sister and to the fraternity so that each one will realise his or her own vocation, and each Fraternity will be a true community, ecclesial and Franciscan, actively present in the Church and in society.

3. The leaders of the OFS at every level should be perpetually professed, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan evangelical way of life, attentive to the life of the Church and of society with a broad and encompassing vision, open to dialogue and ready to give and receive help and collaboration.

4. The leaders should see to the spiritual and technical preparation and animation of the meetings both of the fraternities and of the Councils. They should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. They should see to it that the decisions made are carried out, and they should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters.

**Article 32**

1. The Ministers and Councillors should live and foster the spirit and reality of communion among the brothers and sisters, among the various fraternities and between them and the Franciscan family, They should, above all, cherish peace and reconciliation in and around the fraternity.

2. *Rule 21.* The Ministers’ and Councillors’ task to lead is temporary. The brothers and sisters, rejecting all ambition, should show love for the fraternity with a spirit of service, prepared both to accept and to relinquish the office.

**Article 33**

1. In the guidance and co-ordination of the fraternities and of the Order, the personality and capacity of the individual brothers and sisters and of the individual fraternities should be promoted. The plurality of expressions of the Franciscan ideal and cultural variety must be respected.

2. The Councils of higher levels should not do what can be adequately carried out either by the local fraternities or by a Council of a lower level. They should respect and promote their vitality so that they fulfil their duties properly. The Local Fraternities and Councils concerned should commit themselves to carry out the decisions of the International Council and of the other Councils of higher levels and to implement their programs, adapting them when necessary to their own situation.

**Article 34**

Where the situation and the needs of the members require it, sections or groups which gather members sharing particular needs, common interests, or the same choices, may be established within the Fraternity under the guidance of the one Council.

Such groups can give themselves specific norms relative to their meetings and activities, firmly remaining faithful, however, to the requirements which arise from membership in the one Fraternity. National Statutes may establish criteria suitable for the formation and functioning of these sections or groups.

**Article 35**

1. Secular Priests who recognise that they are called by the Spirit to participate in the charism of Saint Francis of Assisi within the Secular Fraternity should find in it specific attention in conformity with their mission among the People of God.

2. Secular Franciscan priests may also gather in personal fraternities in order to pursue the ascetical and pastoral incentives which the life and doctrine of Francis and the Rule of the OFS offer them to live their vocation in the Church better. It is proper that these fraternities have their own Statutes which envision concrete forms for their composition, their fraternal meetings and for spiritual formation as well as for making their communion with the whole Order living and functional.

**Article 36**

1. The brothers and sisters who commit themselves with private vows to live in the spirit of the beatitudes and to make themselves more disposed to contemplation and to the service of the fraternities can be a great help in the spiritual and apostolic development of the OFS.

2. These brothers and sisters may gather in groups according to Statutes approved by the National Council, or when these groups spread beyond the borders of a nation, by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.

3. Such Statutes should be in harmony with the present Constitutions.

**Title II**

**ENTRANCE INTO THE ORDER**

**AND FORMATION**

**Article 37**

1. *Rule 23.* Membership in the Order is attained through a time of initiation, a time of formation, and the profession of the Rule.

2. The journey of formation, which should develop throughout life, begins with entrance into the fraternity. Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the principal agent of formation and always attentive to collaboration with Him, those responsible for formation are: the candidate, the entire fraternity, the Council with the Minister, the Master of formation and the Assistant as Spiritual Guide.

3. The brothers and sisters are responsible for their own formation, developing in an ever more perfect way the vocation received from the Lord. The fraternity is called to help the brothers and sisters in this journey by means of a warm welcome, prayer, and example.

4. The elaboration and adoption of means of formation, adapted to the local situations and offered as a help to those responsible for formation in the individual fraternities, belong to the National and Regional Councils in common agreement.

**The Time of Initiation**

**Article 38**

1. *Rule 23.* The time of Initiation is a phase preparatory to the true and proper time of formation and is intended for the discernment of the vocation and for the reciprocal acquaintance between the fraternity and the aspiring member. It should guarantee the freedom and the seriousness of entrance into the OFS.

2. The duration of the time of initiation and the forms employed in its development are established by the National Statutes.

3. It belongs to the Fraternity Council to decide possible exemptions to this time of initiation, keeping in mind the guidelines of the National Council.

**Admission to the Order**

**Article 39**

1. *Rule 23.* The request for admission to the Order is presented by the Aspirant to the Minister of a local or personal fraternity by a formal act, in writing if possible.

2. Conditions for admission are: to profess the Catholic faith, to live in communion with the Church, to be of good moral standing, and to show clear signs of a vocation.[[71]](#footnote-71)

3. The Council of the fraternity decides collegially on the request, gives a formal answer to the Aspirant, and communicates this to the fraternity.

4. The rite of admission is performed according to the Ritual.[[72]](#footnote-72) The act is to be registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.

**The Time of Formation**

**Article 40**

1. *Rule 23.* The time of Formation lasts at least one year. The National Statutes can establish a longer period. The purpose of this period is the maturation of the vocation, the experience of the evangelical life in fraternity and a better knowledge of the Order. This formation should be carried out with frequent meetings for study and prayer and with concrete experiences of service and of apostolate. These meetings should be held, as far as possible and opportune, in common with the candidates of other fraternities.

2. The candidates are guided to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, to come to know the person and writings of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality and to study the Rule and Constitutions. They are trained in a love for the Church and acceptance of her teaching. The laity practice living their Secular commitment in the world in an evangelical way.

3. Participation in the meetings of the Local Fraternity is indispensable presupposition for initiation into community prayer and into fraternity life.

4. A style of teaching which is Franciscan in character and which fits the mentality of the persons concerned should be adopted.

**The Profession or Promise of Evangelical Life**

**Article 41**

1. *Rule 23.* Having completed the time of Initial Formation, the candidate submits to the Minister of the Local Fraternity a request to make his or her profession. Having heard the Master of Formation and the assistant, the Fraternity Council decides by secret ballot on the admission to profession, gives its reply to the candidate and informs the fraternity.

2. The conditions for the profession or promise of evangelical life are:

- attainment of the age established by the National Statutes;

- active participation in the time of formation for at least one year;

- the consent of the Council of the Local Fraternity.

3. Where it is held to be opportune to lengthen the time of formation, it must not be extended to more than a year beyond the time established by the National Statutes.

**Article 42**

1. Profession is the solemn ecclesial act by which the candidate, remembering the call received from Christ, renews the baptismal promises and publicly affirms his or her personal commitment to live the Gospel in the world according to the example of Francis and following the Rule of the OFS.

2. *Rule 23.* Profession incorporates the candidate into the Order and is by its nature a perpetual commitment. Perpetual Profession, because of objective and specific pedagogical reasons, may be preceded by a Temporary Profession, renewable annually. The total time of Temporary Profession may not be longer than three years.[[73]](#footnote-73)

3. Profession is accepted by the Minister of the Local Fraternity or by his or her delegate in the name of the Church and of the OFS. The rite is carried out according to the norms of the Ritual.[[74]](#footnote-74)

4. Profession does not only commit those professed to the fraternity but also in the same way it commits the Fraternity to be concerned with their human and religious well-being.

5. The act of Profession is registered and preserved in the records of the fraternity.

**Article 43**

The National Statutes establish:

*- Rule 23.* the minimum age for Profession which, however, may not be less than eighteen years completed;

- the distinctive sign of membership in the Order (the “Tau” or other Franciscan symbol).

**Continuing Formation**

**Article 44**

1. Begun by the preceding stages, the formation of the brothers and sisters takes place in a permanent and continuous way. It should be understood as an aid in the conversion of each[[75]](#footnote-75) and every one and in the fulfilment of their proper mission in the Church and in society.

2. The Fraternity has the duty to give special attention to the formation of the newly professed and of the Temporarily Professed, to help them become fully mature in their vocation and develop a true sense of belonging.

3. Ongoing formation – accomplished by means of courses, gatherings, and the sharing of experience aims to assist the brothers and sisters:

*- Rule 4.* in listening to and meditating on the Word of God, “going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel;”

- in reflecting on events in the Church and in society in the light of faith and with the help of the documents of the teaching Church, consequently taking consistent positions;

- in discerning and deepening the Franciscan vocation by studying the writings of Saint Francis, Saint Clare, and other Franciscan authors.

**Promotion of Vocations**

**Article 45**

1. The promotion of vocations to the Order is a duty of all the brothers and sisters and is a sign of the vitality of the fraternities themselves.

The brothers and sisters, convinced of the validity of the Franciscan way of life, should pray that God may give the grace of the Franciscan vocation to new members.

2. Although nothing can substitute for the witness of each member and of the fraternity, the Councils must adopt appropriate means to promote the Secular Franciscan vocation.

**Title III**

**THE FRATERNITY AT THE**

**VARIOUS LEVELS**

**The Local Fraternity**

**Article 46**

1. *Rule 22.* The canonical establishment of the Local Fraternity belongs to the competent religious Major Superior at the request of the brothers and sisters concerned and with the prior consultation and collaboration of the Council of the higher level to which the new fraternity will be related according to the National Statutes.

The written consent of the Local Ordinary (Bishop) is necessary for the canonical establishment of a fraternity outside the houses or churches of the Franciscan religious of the First Order or the TOR.[[76]](#footnote-76)

2. For the valid establishment of a Local Fraternity, at least five perpetually professed members are required. The admission and profession of these first brothers and sisters will be received by the Council of another Local Fraternity or by the Council of a higher level which will have provided for their formation in appropriate ways. The acts of Admission and Profession and the Decree of Establishment are preserved in the records of the fraternity. Copies are sent to the Council of the higher level.

3. If there is not yet a fraternity of the OFS in a nation, it belongs to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS to make provision in this regard.

**Article 47**

1. *Rule 22.* Each Local Fraternity, the primary cell of the one OFS, is entrusted to the pastoral care of the religious Franciscan Order that canonically established it.

2. A Local Fraternity may pass to the pastoral care of another religious Franciscan Order in the ways determined by the National Statutes.

**Article 48**

1. In the case of cessation of a Fraternity, the patrimonial goods of the same, the library and the records are acquired by the fraternity of the immediately higher level.

2. In the case of revival, according to the canonical laws, the Fraternity will repossess any remaining goods, its own library, and records.

**The Fraternity Council**

**Article 49**

1. The Council of the Local Fraternity is composed of the following offices: Minister, Vice-Minister, Secretary, Treasurer and Master of Formation. Other offices may be added according to the needs of each fraternity. The Spiritual Assistant of the fraternity forms part of the Council by right.[[77]](#footnote-77)

2. The Fraternity, meeting in an Assembly or Chapter, discusses questions regarding its own life and organisation. Every three years, in an elective Assembly or Chapter, the fraternity elects the Minister and the Council in the way established by the Constitutions and Statutes.

**Article 50**

1. It is the duty of the Council of the Local Fraternity:

- to promote the initiatives necessary for fostering fraternal life, for improving the human, Christian and Franciscan formation of its members and for sustaining their witness and commitment in the world;

- to make concrete and courageous choices;

- appropriate for the situation of the fraternity, from among the numerous activities possible in the field of the apostolate.

2. The duties of the Council are also:

a) to decide on the acceptance and admission to profession of new brothers and sisters;[[78]](#footnote-78)

b) to establish a fraternal dialogue with members in particular difficulties and to adopt consequent measures;

c) to receive the request for withdrawal and to decide on the suspension of a member from the fraternity;

d) to decide on the establishment of sections or groups in conformity with the Constitutions and the Statutes;

e) to decide on the destination of available funds and in general, to deliberate on matters concerning financial management and economic affairs of the fraternity;

f) to assign duties to the Councillors and to the other professed members;

g) to request from the competent superiors of the First Order and the T.O.R. suitable and prepared religious as assistants;

h) to perform such other duties as are required by these Constitutions or which are necessary to carry out its proper purposes.

**The Offices in the Fraternity**

**Article 51**

1. While firmly upholding the co-responsibility of the Council to animate and guide the fraternity, the Minister, as the primary person responsible for the fraternity, is expected to make sure that the directions and the decisions of the Council are put into practice and will keep the Council informed about what he or she is doing.

2. The Minister also has the following duties:

a) to call, to preside at, and to direct the meetings of the fraternity and Council; to convoke every three years the elective chapter of the fraternity, having heard the Council on the formalities of the convocation;

b) to prepare the annual report to be sent to the Council of the higher level after it has been approved by the Council of the fraternity;

c) to represent the fraternity in all its relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities. When the fraternity acquires a juridical personality in the civil order, the Minister becomes, when possible, its legal representative;

d) to request, with the consent of the Council, the pastoral and fraternal visits, at least once every three years;

e) to put into effect those acts which the Constitutions refer to his or her competence.

**Article 52**

1. The Vice-Minister has the following duties:

a) to collaborate in a fraternal spirit and to support the Minister in carrying out his or her specific duties;

b) to exercise the functions entrusted by the Council and/or by the assembly or chapter;

c) to take the place of the Minister in both duties and responsibilities in case of absence or temporary impediment;

d) to assume the functions of the Minister when the office remains vacant.[[79]](#footnote-79)

2. The Secretary has the following duties:

a) to compile the official acts of the fraternity and of the Council and to assure that they are sent to their respective proper recipients;

b) to see to the updating and preservation of the records and the registers, noting admissions, professions, deaths, withdrawals, and transfers from the fraternity;[[80]](#footnote-80)

c) to provide for the communication of the more important facts to the various levels and, if appropriate to provide for their dissemination through the mass media.

3. The Master of Formation has the following duties:

a) to co-ordinate, with the help of the other members of the Council, the formative activities of the fraternity;

b) to instruct and enliven the inquirers during the time of initiation, the candidates during the period of initial formation, and the newly professed;

c) to inform the Council of the fraternity prior to profession, concerning the suitability of the candidate for a commitment to live according to the Rule.

4. The Treasurer, or Bursar, has the following duties:

a) to guard diligently the contributions received, recording each receipt in the appropriate register, with the date on which it was given, the name of the contributor, or the one from whom it was collected;

b) to record in the same register the items of expense, specifying the date and the purpose, in conformity with the directions of the fraternity Council;

c) to render an account of his or her administration to the assembly and to the Council of the fraternity according to the norms of the National Statutes.

5. The provisions regarding the rights and duties of the Vice-Minister, the Secretary and the Treasurer apply, with the appropriate adaptations, to all levels.

**Participation in the Life of the Fraternity**

**Article 53**

1. *Rule 24.* The fraternity must offer to its members opportunities for coming together and collaborating through meetings to be held with as great a frequency as allowed by the situation and with the involvement of all its members.

2. *Rule 6-8.* The Fraternity should come together periodically, also as an ecclesial community to celebrate the Eucharist in a climate which strengthens the fraternal bond and characterises the identity of the Franciscan family. Where for whatever reason, this particular celebration may not be possible, they should participate in the celebration of the larger ecclesial community.

3. Insertion into a Local Fraternity and participation in fraternity life is essential for belonging to the OFS. Appropriate initiatives should be adopted according to the directives of the National Statutes, to keep those brothers and sisters united to the fraternity who – for valid reasons of health, family, work, or distance – cannot actively participate in community life.

4. The Fraternity remembers with gratitude, its brothers and sisters who have passed away and continues its communion with them by prayer and in the Eucharist.

5. The National Statutes can indicate special forms of association with the fraternity for those who, without becoming a member of the OFS, want to participate in its life and activities.

**Article 54**

1. In cases where the fraternity of whatever level has property or real estate at its disposal, the procedures necessary for that fraternity to acquire a juridical personality in the civil order must be followed in conformity with the National Statutes.

2. Based on the respective civil legislation, the National Statutes must establish precise criteria regarding the purpose of the juridical person, the administration of its material goods and the relevant internal controls. They must also contain instructions so that the establishing document may provide for the disposal of its property in case the juridical person ceases to exist.

3. The National Statutes must also set up precise criteria for local fraternities that possess or administer property or real estate, so that the respective Council, before its term of office is finished, has the fraternity’s financial and real estate situation audited either by an expert who is not a member of the Council or by the fraternity’s board of examiners.

**Transfer to another Fraternity,**

**Withdrawal, Suspension, and Dismissal**

**from the Fraternity and from the Order**

**Transfer**

**Article 55**

If a brother or sister, for any reasonable cause, desires transfer to another fraternity, he or she first informs the Council of the fraternity to which he or she belongs and then makes the request including the reasons for the transfer, to the Minister of the fraternity to which he or she wishes to belong. The Council makes its decision after having received the necessary information in writing from the fraternity of origin.

**Temporary Provisions**

**Article 56**

1. *Rule 23.* Members who find themselves in difficulty may ask, with a formal act, temporary withdrawal from the fraternity. The Council will evaluate the request with love and prudence after a fraternal dialogue between the Minister and the assistant with the person concerned. If the reasons appear to be well-founded, after the brother or sister in difficulty has been given time to reconsider, the Council agrees to the request.

2. The repeated and prolonged default in the obligations of the life of the fraternity and other conduct in serious opposition to the Rule have to be discussed by the Council in dialogue with the person at fault. Only in the case of obstinacy or relapse may the Council decide, with a secret vote, to suspend someone. It communicates its decision in writing to the person concerned.

3. Voluntary withdrawal or the provision for suspension must be noted in the registers of the fraternity. It involves exclusion from the meetings and activities of the fraternity, including the right of active and passive voice, but membership in the Order itself is not affected.

**Article 57**

1. In the case of voluntary withdrawal or of suspension from the fraternity, the secular Franciscan may ask to be readmitted by addressing an appropriate written request to the Minister.

2. After examining the reasons offered by the person involved, the Council evaluates whether the causes which led to the withdrawal or suspension can be considered as overcome. If the conclusion is affirmative, it readmits him or her, and the decision is recorded in the proceedings of the fraternity.

**Definitive Provisions**

**Article 58**

1. The brother or sister, who intends to withdraw definitively from the Order, communicates so in writing to the Minister of the fraternity. The Minister and the assistant of the local fraternity, with charity and prudence, discuss the matter with the person concerned and keep the Council informed. If the brother or sister confirms the decision in writing, the Council takes notice and communicates it in writing to the person concerned. The definitive withdrawal is recorded in the register of the fraternity and communicated to the Council of the higher level.

2. In case of serious causes, provided that they are external, imputable and juridically proven, the Minister and the assistant of the local fraternity, with charity and prudence, discuss the matter with the brother or sister concerned and keep the Council informed. The brother or sister is given time to reflect and to discern, possibly with the help of an external and competent expert. If the time set aside for reflection passes without any result, the Council of the fraternity request the Council of the higher level to dismiss the brother or sister from the Order. The request must be accompanied by all the documentation relative to the case. The Council of the higher level will issue the decree of dismissal after having collegially examined the request with the relative documentation and having verified observance of the directives of the Law and of the Constitutions.

3. The brother or sister who publicly rejects the faith or defects from ecclesiastical communion, or upon whom an excommunication is imposed or declared, by the fact itself ceases to be a member of the Order. This does not exonerate the Council of the local fraternity from discussing the matter with the person concerned and offering fraternal help. The Council of a higher level, upon request of the Council of the local fraternity, collects the proofs and officially declares that the person has ceased to be a member of the Order.

4. The decree of dismissal or the declaration that the person has ceased to be a member of the Order, in order to become effective, must be confirmed by the National Council to whom all the documentation will be sent.

**Article 59**

If anyone is convinced that he or she has been wronged by a measure adopted, that person may appeal within three months to the Council above the one that adopted the decision in question and, in successive cases, to further levels all the way up to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS and, in the final instance, to the Holy See.

**Article 60**

What is said in these Constitutions with respect to the local fraternities is valid, to the extent that it is applicable, for the personal fraternities also.

**The Regional Fraternity**

**Article 61**

1. The Regional fraternity is the organic union of all the local fraternities existing in a territory or which can be integrated into a natural unity, either by geographic proximity or by common problems and pastoral circumstances. It assures the link between the local fraternities and the National Fraternity in respect to the unity of the OFS and in accord with the co-operative efforts of the Franciscan religious orders to provide spiritual assistance within the area.

2. It is for the National Council to compose the Regional fraternity according to the Constitutions and to the National Statutes. The competent religious superiors, from whom spiritual assistance must be sought, should be informed of it.

3. The Regional fraternity:

- is animated and guided by Council and a Minister;

- is ruled by the National Statutes and by its own Statutes;

- has its own seat.

**Article 62**

1. The Regional Council is constituted according to the provisions of the National Statutes and of its own Regional Statutes. At the heart of the Regional Council, there can be set up an Executive Council (or Board) whose duties are determined by those same Statutes.

2. The Regional Council has the following duties:

a. to prepare the celebration of the elective chapter;

b. to promote, animate and co-ordinate the life and activities of the OFS and its insertion into the local Church within the regional area;

c. to detail the action plan of the OFS within the region according to the directives of the National Council and in collaboration with it and to publicize that program to the local fraternities;

d. to communicate the directives of the National Council and of the local Church to the local fraternities;

e. to provide for the formation of those responsible for animation;

f. to offer to local fraternities activities which support their formative and operative needs;

g. to discuss and approve the annual report to the National Council;

h. to schedule, when circumstances recommend so, the fraternal visit to the local fraternities, even if it is not requested;

i. to make decisions regarding the use of available funds and, in general, to deliberate on matters regarding the financial management and the economic affairs of the regional Fraternity;

j. to have, before its term of office is finished, the Regional Fraternity’s financial and real estate situation audited either by an expert who is not a member of the Council or by the fraternity’s board of examiners;

k. to perform such other duties as are indicated by the Constitutions or necessary to achieve its own aims.

**Article 63**

1. While firmly preserving the co-responsibility of the Council for the animation and guidance of the Regional Fraternity it is the duty of the Minister, who has the primary responsibility, to see that the directions and decisions of the Council are put into practice. He or she will keep the Council informed concerning his or her activities.

2. In addition, the Regional Minister has the duty:

a. to convoke and preside at the meetings of the Regional Council; to convoke every three years the elective chapter of the fraternity after having listened to the Council on the formalities of the convocation;

b. to preside at and to confirm the elections of the local fraternities either in person or through a delegated member of the Regional Council, with the exception of the Spiritual Assistant;

c. to make fraternal visits to the local fraternities, personally or through a delegate who is a member of the Council;

d. to participate in the meetings called by the National Council;

e. to represent the Fraternity whenever it has acquired juridical personality in the civil order;

f. to prepare the annual report to the National Council;

g. to request the pastoral and fraternal visits with the consent of the Council, at least once every three years.

**Article 64**

The Regional chapter is the representative organ of all the fraternities existing within the confines of a Regional Fraternity, with elective and deliberative power.

The National Statutes provide for the formalities of convocation, its composition, frequency, and powers.

**The National Fraternity**

**Article 65**

1. The National Fraternity is the organic union of the local fraternities existing within the territory of one or more states which are joined and co-ordinated among themselves through Regional fraternities, wherever they exist.

2. It is the duty of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS to provide for the establishment of new National Fraternities upon request and in dialogue with the Councils of the fraternities concerned. The competent religious superiors of the nation, of whom spiritual assistance will be requested, should be informed.

3. The National Fraternity:

- is animated and guided by a Council and a Minister;

- is governed by its own Statutes;

- has its own seat.

**Article 66**

1. The National Council is constituted according to the provisions of the National Statutes. At the heart of the National Council, there can be set up an Executive Council (or board) whose duties are determined by those same Statutes.

2. The National Council has the duty:

a. to prepare the celebration of the National Elective Chapter according to its own Statutes;

b. to make known and to promote the secular Franciscan spirituality in the whole area of its own National Fraternity;

c. to decide upon programs of annual activities of a National character;

d. to seek, indicate, publish and distribute the necessary instruments for the formation of the Secular Franciscans;

e. to animate and co-ordinate the activities of the Regional Councils;

f. to maintain the connection with the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS;

g. to make sure that the National Fraternity be represented in the International Council and to assume the responsibility for the expenses involved;

h. to discuss and approve the annual report to Presidency of the International Council of the OFS

i. to see the presence of the OFS in the ecclesial bodies at the National level;

j. to schedule, when circumstances recommend so, the fraternal visit to the Regional and Local Fraternities, even if it is not requested;

k. to make decisions regarding the management of the available funds and, in general, regarding the economic affairs of the Fraternity;

l. to have, before its term of office is finished, the National Fraternity’s financial and real estate situation audited either by an expert who is not a member of the Council or by the Fraternity’s board of examiners;

m. to perform such other duties as are indicated by the Constitutions or necessary to achieve its own aims.

**Article 67**

1. While firmly preserving the co-responsibility of the Council for the animation and guidance of the National Fraternity it is the duty of the Minister, who has the primary responsibility, to see that the directions and decisions of the Council are put into practice. He or she will keep the Council informed concerning his or her activities.

2. In addition, the National Minister has the duty:

a. to convoke and preside at the meetings of the National Council; to convoke every three years the elective chapter of the National Fraternity, according to the National Statutes, after having listened to the Council on the formalities of the convocation;

b. to direct and co-ordinate with the National leaders the activities at the National level;

c. to give a report to the National Council and chapter on the life and activity of the OFS in the country;

d. to represent the National Fraternity in contacts with ecclesiastical and civil authorities. When the National Fraternity has a civil juridical personality, its legal representation belongs to the Minister;

e. to preside at and to confirm the elections of the Regional fraternities either in person or through a delegated member of the National Council, with the exception of the Spiritual Assistant;

f. to make fraternal visits to the Regional Councils, personally or through a delegate who is a member of the National Council;

g. to request the fraternal and pastoral visits, with the consent of the Council, at least once every six years.

**Article 68**

1. The National Chapter is the representative organ of the fraternities existing within the confines of a Fraternity. It has legislative, deliberative, and elective powers. In conformity with the Rule and Constitutions, it may make legislative decisions and give norms valid within its National confines. The National Statutes determine the composition of the National Chapter, its frequency, its powers, and how to convoke it.

2. The National Statutes may envisage other forms of meetings and assemblies to promote the life and apostolate at the National level.

**The International Fraternity**

**Article 69**

1. The International Fraternity is constituted by the organic union of all the Catholic secular Franciscan fraternities in the world. It is identical to the OFS. It has its own juridical personality within the Church. It is organised, and it functions in conformity with the Constitutions and its own Statutes.

2. The International Fraternity is guided and animated by the International Council of the OFS (CIOFS), with its seat in Rome (Italy), by its Presidency and by the General Minister or International president.

**Article 70**

1. The International Council is composed of the following members, elected according to the norms of the Constitutions and its own Statutes:

- professed brothers and sisters of the OFS;

- representatives of the Franciscan Youth.

In addition, the four General Assistants to the OFS form part of the International Council.

2. The Presidency of the International Council of the OFS is constituted within the International Council of which it forms an integral part.

3. The International Council convened in General Chapter is the highest governing body of the OFS with legislative, deliberative and elective powers. It can make legislative decisions and give norms in conformity with the Rule and the Constitutions.

4. The International Council meets every six years in elective General Chapter and at least once between two elective General chapters, according to the norms established by the Constitutions and by the International Statutes.

**Article 71**

1. The purposes and duties of the International Council of the OFS are:

a. to promote and sustain the evangelical life according to the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi within the secular condition of the faithful living throughout the world;

b. to increase the sense of unity of the OFS while respecting the pluralism of the persons and groups, and to strengthen the bond of communion, collaboration and sharing among the National fraternities;

c. to harmonise the sound traditions, according to the original nature of the OFS, with advances in theological, pastoral and legislative fields, with a view to a specific evangelical Franciscan formation;

d. to contribute, in line with the tradition of the OFS, to the spreading of ideas and initiatives which are valuable for promoting the availability of Secular Franciscans in the life of the Church and of society;

e. to determine the orientations and establish priorities for the actions of its Presidency;

f. to interpret the Constitutions according to article 5. 2.

2. The International Statutes specify the composition of the International Council and how to convoke its meetings.

**Article 72**

1. The Presidency of the International Council of the OFS is composed of:

- the General Minister;

- the Vice-Minister;

- the presidency Councillors;

- a member of the Franciscan Youth;

- the General Assistants of the OFS.

2. The presidency Councillors are elected according to the International Statutes, which determine their number and the areas represented.

**Article 73**

The duties and tasks of the Presidency are:

a. to see that the decisions and orientations of the General chapter are carried out;

b. to co-ordinate, animate, and guide the OFS at the International level, in order to make the interdependence and reciprocity of the OFS a reality at the various levels of fraternity;

c. to intervene in a spirit of service, according to the circumstances, providing fraternal aid in the clarification and resolution of grave and urgent problems of the OFS, informing the National Council concerned and the next General Chapter;

d. to strengthen reciprocal relationships of collaboration between the OFS and the other components of the Franciscan family at the world level;

e. to organise meetings or assemblies, according to the norms of the International Statutes to promote the life and the apostolate of the OFS at the International level;

f. to collaborate with organisations and associations which defend the same values;

g. to fulfil the other duties indicated in the Constitutions or needed in order to reach its own proper goals.

**Article 74**

1. While firmly preserving the co-responsibility of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS in the guidance and animation of the International Fraternity, it belongs to the General Minister, who has the primary responsibility, to see that the directions and decisions of the General Chapter and of the Presidency are put into practice and to inform them concerning his or her activities.

2. In addition, the General Minister has the duty:

a. to convoke and preside at the meetings of the Presidency according to its own Statutes;

b. to convoke the meetings of the General Chapter, with the consent of the Presidency, and to preside at them;

c. to be a visible and effective sign of the communion and life-giving reciprocity between the OFS and the General Ministers of the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, among whom he or she represents the OFS, and to preserve the bond with the conference of General Assistants;

d. to represent the OFS at the world level before ecclesiastical and civil authorities. When the International Fraternity has a civil juridical personality, its legal representation belongs to the Minister;

e. to make the fraternal visit to the National Councils, personally or through a delegate;

f. to preside at the elections of the National Councils, personally or through a delegate;

g. to request with the consent of the Presidency, the pastoral visit by the Conference of the General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR;

h. to intervene in urgent cases, informing the Presidency of them;

i. to sign the official documents of the International Fraternity;

j. to exercise, with the consent of the Presidency, the property rights of the International Fraternity together with another Councillor of the Presidency designated by that same body;

k. before every General Chapter, have the financial and property situation of the International Fraternity verified by a qualified accountant who is not involved in the economic and financial management of the Presidency.

**Article 75**

The specific duties of the International Councillors are determined by the International Statutes.

**Title IV**

**ELECTION TO AND TERMINATION OF OFFICES**

**Elections**

**Article 76**

1. The elections at the various levels will take place according to the norms of the law of the Church[[81]](#footnote-81) and of the Constitutions.

The convocation should be carried out at least one month in advance, indicating the place, the day and the time of the election.

2. The Elective Assembly, or Chapter, will be presided over by the Minister of the immediately higher level, or by his or her delegate, who confirms the election.

The President or the Delegate cannot preside at the elections in his or her Local Fraternity, nor the elections of the Council of a higher level, of whose Council he or she is a member.

The Spiritual Assistant of the immediately higher level or his delegate is to be present as a witness of the communion with the First Order and the T.O.R.

A representative of the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the T.O.R. presides at and confirms the elections of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.

3. The President of the Chapter and the Assistant of the higher level do not have the right to vote.

4. The president of the chapter designates, among the members of that chapter, a Secretary and two Scrutineers.

**Article 77**

1. In the Local Fraternity, the Perpetually Professed of the same fraternity have active voice, that is can elect, and passive voice, that is can be elected. The Temporarily Professed have only active voice.

2. At the other levels, the following have active voice: the secular members of the outgoing Council, the representatives of the immediately lower level and of the Franciscan Youth, if professed. It belongs to the particular Statutes to establish more concrete norms in application of the preceding norm, taking care to assure the broadest elective base. The Perpetually Professed Secular Franciscans of the corresponding area have passive voice.

3. Both the National and the International Statutes – each for its own area – can establish objective qualifications regarding who can be elected to the various offices.

4. The presence of more than half of the number of those having the right to vote is required for the valid celebration of an Elective Chapter. For the local level, the National Statutes can establish a different norm.

**Article 78**

1. An absolute majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret, is required for the elections of the Minister. After two inconclusive ballots, the voting continues between the two candidates who have obtained the largest number of votes or, in case there are more than two, between the two candidates who are oldest by profession. If there is still a tie after the third ballot, the older by profession will be considered elected.

2. The election of the Vice-Minister proceeds in the same manner.

3. For the election of the Councillors, after a first ballot without an absolute majority, a relative majority of the votes of those present, cast in secret is sufficient, unless the particular Statutes require a greater majority.

4. The Secretary announces the result of the elections; the President confirms the election according to the Ritual[[82]](#footnote-82) if all has been carried out properly and those elected have accepted their office.

**Article 79**

1. The Minister and Vice-Minister may be elected for two consecutive terms of three years each. For a third and final successive election to the office of Minister or Vice-Minister, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary.

2. The out-going Minister cannot be elected Vice-Minister.

3. The Councillors may be elected for additional successive terms of three years. Beginning with the third successive election, a majority of two-thirds of the votes of those present, which must be obtained on the first ballot, will be necessary.

4. The General Minister, Vice-Minister and Presidency Councillors can only be elected for two consecutive terms of six years.

5. The Council of the higher level has the right and duty to invalidate the elections and to call them anew in all cases of inobservance of the preceding norms.

**Article 80**

The particular Statutes may include further directives concerning elections, as long as they are not contrary to the Constitutions.

**Provisions for Vacancy,**

**Resignation and Dismissal**

**Vacant Offices**

**Article 81**

1. When the office of Minister remains vacant as a result of death, resignation or other impediment of a definitive character, the Vice-Minister assumes the office until the end of the term for which the Minister was originally elected.

2. If the office of Vice-Minister becomes vacant, one of the Councillors is elected to the office of Vice-Minister by the Council of the Fraternity, to serve until the next Elective Chapter.

3. When the office of Councillor becomes vacant, the Council will proceed to substitute for him or her in conformity with its own Statutes, to serve until the next Elective Chapter.

**Incompatible Offices**

**Article 82**

The following are incompatible:

a. the office of Minister at two different levels;

b. the offices of Minister, Vice-Minister, Secretary and Treasurer at the same level.

**Resignation of Office**

**Article 83**

1. When a Minister of whatever level resigns during a Chapter, that same Chapter can accept the resignation. When a Minister resigns outside the time of Chapter, that resignation must be presented to the Council. If the resignation is accepted, it must be confirmed by the Minister of the higher level; if the General Minister is resigning, the confirmation comes from the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR.

2. The resignation of other offices is presented to the Minister and to his or her Council, who are competent to accept the resignation.

**Removal**

**Article 84**

1. In the case in which the Minister does not fulfil his or her duties, the Council concerned manifests its concerns in a fraternal dialogue with the Minister. If this does not produce positive results, the Council should inform the Council of the higher level whose competence it is to examine the case and, if needed, by secret ballot, decide to remove the Minister.

2. For a serious public, and proved reason, the Council of a higher level, after a fraternal dialogue with the person concerned, may, by a secret ballot, order the removal of a Minister of a lower level.

3. When there is a serious reason to remove those who hold other offices of the Council, it is the responsibility of that Council to which they belong to make its decision by a secret ballot after there has been a fraternal dialogue with the person involved.

4. A recourse which by itself suspends the action to remove someone from office can be presented within thirty days to the Council of the level immediately higher than the one which imposed the sanction.

5. The removal of the General Minister belongs to the competence of the conference of the General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR.

6. When there is a case of serious lack of concern or evidence of irregularities on the part of a Minister or a Council, the Council of the next higher level conducts a fraternal visit of the Council in question and, if necessary, requests a Pastoral Visit. With charity and prudence, it will evaluate the circumstances uncovered and decide on the best way to proceed, not excluding the possibility of removal of the Council or leaders involved.

**Title V**

**SPIRITUAL AND**

**PASTORAL ASSISTANCE**

**OF THE OFS**

**Article 85**

1. As an integral part of the Franciscan family and called to live the charism of Francis within the secular dimension, the OFS has particular and close relations to the First Order and the TOR.[[83]](#footnote-83)

2. The spiritual and pastoral care of the OFS, entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, is the duty above all of their General and Provincial Ministers. The *altius moderamen,* of which Canon 303 speaks, belongs to them. The purpose of the *altius moderamen* is to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church and union with the Franciscan family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans.

**Article 86**

1. The General and Provincial Ministers exercise their office with respect to the OFS through:

- the establishment of fraternities;

the pastoral visits;

- the spiritual assistance to the fraternities at the various levels.

They may exercise this office personally or through a delegate.

2. This service of the religious Ministers completes but does not substitute for the Secular Councils and Ministers to whom belongs the guidance, co-ordination, and animation of the fraternities at the various levels.

**Article 87**

1. For all that concerns the OFS as a whole, the *altius moderamen* must be exercised by the General Ministers collegially.

2. It belongs to the Conference of General Ministers of the First Order and the TOR:

a. to take care of the relations with the Holy See concerning the approval of the legislative or liturgical documents, which need to be approved by the Holy See;

b. to visit the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS;

c. to confirm the election of the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.

3. Each General Minister, for his own Order, sees to the interest of the religious for the OFS and to their preparation for service to it according to the respective Constitutions and the Constitutions of the OFS.

**Article 88**

1. The Provincial Ministers and the other Major Superiors, in the area of their own jurisdiction, guarantee spiritual assistance to the Local Fraternities entrusted to the jurisdiction. They foster the interest of their own religious in the OFS and ensure that suitable and well-prepared persons are appointed for the service of spiritual assistance.

2. It is the specific competence of the Major Superiors, in name of their jurisdiction:

a. to establish canonically new local fraternities and guarantee them spiritual assistance;

b. to animate spiritually and visit the local fraternities assisted by their own jurisdiction;

c. to keep themselves informed on the spiritual assistance given to the OFS.

3. The Major Superiors are responsible for the spiritual assistance to the local fraternities which they have established.

4. The Major Superiors with jurisdiction in the same territory are to establish together the most adequate means to guarantee spiritual assistance to local fraternities which, because of causes beyond their control, could remain without such assistance.

5. The Major Superiors with jurisdiction in the same territory are to establish together the most adequate means for carrying out collegially their mission with respect to the Regional and National fraternities of the OFS.

**Article 89**

1. By virtue of the vital reciprocity between the religious and the secular members of the Franciscan Family and in regard to the responsibilities of Major Superiors, spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the OFS at all levels must be assured as a fundamental element of communion.

2. The Spiritual Assistant is the person designated by the competent Major Superior to carry out this service for a specific fraternity of the OFS.

3. To be a witness of Franciscan spirituality and of the fraternal affection of the religious towards the Secular Franciscans, and to be a bond of communion between his Order and the OFS, the Spiritual Assistant should be a Franciscan religious, member of the First Order or the T.O.R.

4. When it is not possible to give such a Spiritual Assistant to the fraternity, the competent Major Superior can entrust the service of spiritual assistance to:

a. religious brothers or sisters of other Franciscan institutes;

b. diocesan clerics or other persons, specially prepared for such service, who are members of the OFS;

c. other diocesan clerics or non-Franciscan religious.

5. The previous authorisation of the Superior or the Local Ordinary, when needed, does not exempt the Franciscan Major Superior of the responsibility for the quality of the pastoral service and of the spiritual assistance given.

**Article 90**

1. The principal task of the Spiritual Assistant is to communicate Franciscan spirituality and to co-operate in the initial and continuing formation of the brothers and sisters.

2 The Spiritual Assistant is by right, with vote, a member of the Council of the Fraternity to which he or she gives assistance and collaborates with it in all activities. The Spiritual Assistant does not exercise the right to vote in financial questions.

3. Specifically:

a. the General Assistants give their service to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS, form a conference, and collegially see to the spiritual assistance to the OFS as a whole;

b. the National Assistants give their service to the National Council; see to the spiritual assistance to the OFS in the whole territory of the National Fraternity and, at the National level, to the co-ordination of the Regional Assistants. If they are more than one, they form a conference and give their service collegially;

c. the Regional Assistants give their service to the Regional Council and see to the spiritual assistance to the Regional Fraternity. If they are more than one, they form a conference and give their service collegially;

d. the Local Assistants give their service to the Local Fraternity and its Council.

**Article 91**

1. The Council of the Fraternity at each level requests suitable and prepared assistants from the competent superiors of the First Order and the TOR.

2. Specifically:

a. the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS requests a General Assistant from the respective General Minister;

b. the National Council requests a National Assistant from the Major Superior, indicated collegially by the Major Superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the National Fraternity;

c. the Regional Council requests an assistant from the Major Superior, indicated collegially by the Major Superiors with jurisdiction in the territory of the Regional Fraternity;

d. the Local Council requests an assistant from the Major Superior of the jurisdiction responsible for the assistance.

3. The competent Major Superior, having heard the Council of the Fraternity concerned, appoints an Assistant according to the norms of these Constitutions and of the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order.*

**Title VI**

**THE FRATERNAL VISIT**

**AND THE PASTORAL VISIT**

**Article 92**

1. *Rule 26.* The purpose of both the pastoral and fraternal visits is to revive the evangelical Franciscan spirit, to assure fidelity to the charism and to the Rule, to offer to help fraternity life, to reinforce the bond of the unity of the Order, and to promote its most effective insertion into the Franciscan family and the Church.

2. With the consent of the appropriate Council, the request for the fraternal visit as well as for the pastoral visit is made:

a. by the Minister of the Local and Regional Fraternity, at least every three years, to the Council of the immediately higher level and to the respective Conference of Spiritual Assistants;

b. by the National Minister, at least every six years, to the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS and to the conference of General Assistants;

c. by the General Minister, at least every six years, to the Conference of General Ministers.

3. For urgent and serious reasons or in case of failure on the part of the Minister or the Council to request it, the fraternal and pastoral visit may be carried out upon the initiative of the respectively competent Council or conference of Spiritual Assistants.

**Article 93**

1. In the visits to the Local Fraternities and to the Councils at the various levels, the Visitor will verify the evangelical and apostolic vitality, the observance of the Rule and Constitutions, and the insertion of the fraternities into the Order and into the Church.

2. In the visits to the Local Fraternities and to the Councils at the various levels, the Visitor will in time communicate the object and the program of the visit to the interested Council. He or she will examine the Registers and the Records, including those relative to the preceding visits, to the election of the Council and to the administration of goods.

The visitor will draw up a report of the visit carried out appending it to the records in the appropriate register of the fraternity visited, and will inform the Council of the level which has held the visit.

3. In the visit to the Local Fraternity, the Visitor will meet with the entire fraternity and with the groups and sections into which it is divided. He or she will give special attention to the brothers and sisters in formation and to those brothers and sisters who may request a personal meeting. Where required, he or she will proceed to the fraternal correction of the shortcomings possibly encountered.

4. If it is useful for the service of the fraternity, the two Visitors, secular and religious, may make the visit at the same time, agreeing beforehand on the program, in a way most consonant with the mission of each of them.

5. The Fraternal and Pastoral visits, carried out by the immediately higher level, do not deprive the visited fraternity of the right to appeal to the Council or to the Conference of Spiritual Assistants of a higher level.

**The Fraternal Visit**

**Article 94**

1. The Fraternal Visit is a moment of communion, an expression of the service and concrete interest of the secular leaders at the various levels, so that the fraternity may grow and be faithful to its vocation.[[84]](#footnote-84)

2. Among the various initiatives to achieve the purpose of the visit, the Visitor will give special attention:

- to the validity of the formation, both initial and permanent;

- to the relations entertained with other fraternities at the different levels, with Franciscan Youth, and with the entire Franciscan family.

- to the observance of the directives and of the guidelines of the International Council of the OFS and of the other Councils;

- to the presence in the Local Church.

3. The Visitor will check the report of the previous audit or verification of the financial and property management of the Council, the Register of the Accounts and every document pertaining to the property of the fraternity and if applicable, the condition of the juridical personality in the civil order, including the fiscal aspects. In absence of the required audit of the financial and property management of the Council, the Visitor can commission such an audit, to be paid by the visited fraternity, to an expert who is not a member of the Council concerned. Wherever he or she deems it opportune, the Visitor will obtain the assistance of a competent person in these aspects.

4. The Visitor will check the records of the Election of the Council. He or she will evaluate the quality of the service offered to the fraternity by the Minister and by the other leaders and will study with them the solution to problems which may arise.

If for whatever reason, he or she should find that their service does not meet the needs of the Fraternity, the Visitor will promote appropriate initiatives, taking into account also the provisions concerning resignation and removal from office, given special circumstances.[[85]](#footnote-85)

5. The Visitor may not carry out the visit of his or her own Local Fraternity, nor of the Council of another level of which he or she is a member.

**The Pastoral Visit**

**Article 95**

1. The Pastoral Visit is a privileged moment of communion with the First Order and the TOR. It is carried out also in the name of the Church and serves to guarantee and promote the observance of the Rule and the Constitutions and fidelity to the Franciscan charism. The Visit is carried out with respect to the organisation and the law proper to the OFS itself.

2. Having verified the canonical establishment of the Fraternity, the Visitor will give attention to the relations between the Fraternity and its Spiritual Assistant and the Local Church The Visitor will meet the pastors (bishop or parish priest) when this is opportune for fostering communion and service for building up the Church.

3. The Visitor will promote collaboration and a sense of co-responsibility among the secular leaders and the Spiritual Assistants. The Visitor is to examine the quality of the spiritual assistance given to the visited fraternity, encourage the Spiritual Assistants in their service, and promote their continuing spiritual and pastoral formation.

4. The Visitor will give special attention to programs, methods, and experiences of formation, to the liturgical and prayer life, and to the apostolic activities of the fraternity.

**Title VII**

**THE FRANCISCAN**

**YOUTH**

**Article 96**

1. The OFS, by virtue of its very vocation, ought to be ready to share its experience of evangelical life with the youth who feel attracted to Saint Francis of Assisi and to seek the means of adequately presenting it to them.

2. The Franciscan Youth (YouFra), as understood by these Constitutions and in so far as the OFS considers itself to be particularly responsible for it, is formed by those young people who feel called by the Holy Spirit to share the experience of the Christian life in fraternity, in the light of the message of Saint Francis of Assisi, deepening their own vocation within the context of the Secular Franciscan Order.

3. The members of the Franciscan Youth consider the Rule of the OFS as an inspirational document for the growth of their own Christian and Franciscan vocation either individually or in a group. After a suitable period of formation, of at least one year, they confirm this option with a personal pledge before God and in the presence of the brothers and sisters.

4. The members of the Franciscan Youth who wish to belong to the OFS should satisfy the requirements of the Rule, the Constitutions, and the Ritual of the OFS.

5. The Franciscan Youth has a specific organisation, methods of formation and teaching methods adequate for the needs of the world of youth, according to the existing realities in the various countries. The National Statutes of the Franciscan Youth should be approved by the respective National Council of the OFS, or in its absence, by the Presidency of the International Council of the OFS.

6. The Franciscan Youth, as a component of the Franciscan family, requests from the competent secular leaders and religious superiors, respectively, fraternal animation and spiritual assistance.

**Article 97**

1. The OFS fraternities will promote the vocation to the Franciscan Youth by means of appropriate and dynamic initiatives. They should see to the vitality, and the expansion of the Franciscan Youth fraternities and will accompany the youth in their journey of human and spiritual growth with proposals for specific activities and contents.

2. The OFS fraternities commit themselves to give to the Franciscan Youth fraternities a fraternal animator, who together with the Spiritual Assistant and the Council of the Franciscan Youth guarantees an adequate secular Franciscan formation.

3. To promote a close communion with the OFS, all leaders of the Franciscan Youth at the International level and at least two members of the National Council of the Franciscan Youth are to be professed Secular Franciscan youth.

4. A representative of the Franciscan Youth is to be designated by his or her Council to form part of the OFS Council of the corresponding level; a representative of the OFS, designated by his or her own Council, forms part of the Council of the Franciscan Youth of the same level. The representative of the Franciscan Youth has a vote in the OFS Council only if he or she is a professed Secular Franciscan.

5. The representatives of the Franciscan Youth in the International Council of the OFS are elected according to the International Statutes which also determine how many there are, what fraternities they represent and what their responsibilities are supposed to be.

**Title VIII**

**IN COMMUNION WITH THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY**

**AND THE CHURCH**

**Article 98.**

1. *Rule 1.* Secular Franciscans should seek to live in life-giving reciprocal communion with all the members of the Franciscan family. They should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular Institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognise Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalisation and serve the cause of peace.

2. They must cultivate a special affection, which expresses itself in concrete initiatives of fraternal communion, towards the sisters of the contemplative life who, like Saint Clare of Assisi, bear witness in the Church and in the world and by whose mediation they expect the abundance of grace for the fraternity and for the works of the apostolate.

**Article 99**

1. *Rule 6.* As a living part of the people of God and inspired by the Seraphic Father, the Secular Franciscans, “living in full communion with the Pope and the bishops”, should seek to know and deepen the doctrine proposed by the teaching Church through its more important documents and they should be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit who vivifies the faith and charity of the people of God.[[86]](#footnote-86) They should collaborate in the initiatives promoted by the Holy See, in a particular way in those areas in which they are called to work by virtue of their secular Franciscan vocation.

2. The OFS, as an International public association, is connected by a special bond to the Roman Pontiff from whom it has received the approval of its Rule and the confirmation of its mission in the Church and in the world.

**Article 100**

1. The vocation to “rebuild” the Church ought to induce the brothers and sisters sincerely to love and to live the union with the local Church in which they develop their own vocation and realise their apostolic commitment, aware that in the diocese the Church of Christ is truly functioning.[[87]](#footnote-87)

2. The Secular Franciscans should fulfil with dedication the duties with which they are occupied in their relations to the local Church. They should lend their help to activities of the apostolate as well as to the social activities existing in the diocese.[[88]](#footnote-88) In the spirit of service, they should make themselves present, as the fraternity of the OFS, within the life of the diocese. They should be ready to collaborate with other ecclesial groups and to participate in pastoral Councils.

3. Fidelity to their own charism, Franciscan and Secular, and the witness of building fraternity sincerely and openly are their principal services to the Church, which is the community of love. They should be recognised in it by their “being,” from which their mission springs.

**Article 101**

1. The Secular Franciscans should collaborate with the bishops and follow their directions in so far as they are the moderators of the ministry of the Word and of the Liturgy and the co-ordinators of the various forms of apostolate in the local Church.[[89]](#footnote-89)

2. The fraternities are subject to the vigilance of the Ordinary in so far as they perform their activities within the local Churches.[[90]](#footnote-90)

**Article 102**

1. The fraternities established in a parish church should seek to co-operate in the animation of the parochial community, in the liturgy and in fraternal relations. They should integrate themselves into the pastoral apostolate as a whole, with preference for those activities more congenial to the secular Franciscan tradition and spirituality.

2. In the parishes entrusted to Franciscan religious, the fraternities constitute the mediation and the secular witness of the Franciscan charism in the parochial community through their exercise of the fruitful, life-giving reciprocity. Therefore, united with the religious, they see to the spreading of the gospel message and of the Franciscan lifestyle.

**Article 103**

1. Remaining faithful to their own identity, the fraternities will take care to make the most of each occasion for prayer, formation, and active collaboration with other ecclesial groups. They should welcome with pleasure those who, without belonging to the OFS, wish to share its experiences and activities.

2. The Fraternities will promote, wherever possible, fraternal relations with non-Catholic associations inspired by Francis.

***“May whoever observes all this***

***be filled in heaven***

***with the blessing of the most high Father,***

***and on earth with that of his beloved Son,***

***together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.”***

(Blessing of St. Francis from the Testament)

**Ritual**

**of the Secular Franciscan Order**

**Ritual of the**

**Secular Franciscan Order**

International Franciscan Liturgical Commission, Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., General Spiritual Assistant, Chairman and Editor

Approved in Latin by the Offices of the Sacred Congregation

for Sacraments and Divine Worship

March 9, 1984, in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption.

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**Foreword**

***History of the Ritual***

For the early 20th century the only Ritual available in English for members of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis was contained in the Third Order prayer book “The Tertiary’s Companion” originally edited by Vincent Schrempp, O.F.M.

In 1955 there was a demand for a more elaborate ritual book, which resulted in the Ritual for Public Functions, Franciscan Third Order, compiled and published by Mark Hegener, O.F.M.

In 1966, following the Second Vatican Council, it became necessary to revise the ceremonial to bring it into accord with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. This resulted in the New Ritual for Public Functions, compiled by Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., and his associates.

In 1978, the revised Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order was approved by Pope Paul VI on June 24 and promulgated by the four Franciscan Ministers General on October 4. Immediately work began on updating the Ritual to conform to the new Rule.

On March 9, 1984, the Latin text of the new Ritual was approved by the Sacred Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship and, on August 5, 1985, this English edition was approved by the same Congregation.

***Authorship of the Text***

The Latin text of this Ritual was compiled by an International Commission. Immediately after its approval on March 9, 1984, an English edition was circulated to the Tertiaries of all English-speaking countries with the invitation for their appraisal and suggestions. The final English text, incorporating the fruits of two rounds of International consultations, was then produced by the International Commission — chaired by General Spiritual Assistant Benet A. Fonck, O.F.M., who also served as its editor — with approval of the Franciscan Friars Conference of the U.S.A. (O.F.M., O.F.M. Cap., O.F.M. Conv., T.O.R.).

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants of the U.S.A. was then commissioned by the Secular Franciscans of the English-speaking countries (Australia, the United States, the Philippines, Ireland, Canada, South Africa, India, England, Zambia, Singapore, Malta and Tanzania) to produce and distribute this new English Ritual for the Third Order Secular.

***A New Spirit***

The Second Vatican Council and the Pauline OFS Rule have injected new spirit and vigour into our Franciscan Family. This new intercontinental Ritual of 1985, coming seven years after the promulgation of the Pauline Rule, adapts our traditional Ritual to this new spirit and style. This one book offers background information, liturgical guidelines, and prayers to enrich the prayer life of our English-speaking sisters and brothers the world over.

While it was necessary to “generalise” certain ceremonial and devotional aspects in this Ritual in order that its basic, essential elements might be useful to all English-speaking nations and cultures, it is within the competence of National Councils to supplement and enrich the ceremonies by incorporating appropriate expressions of their cultures and peoples.

Franciscan communities who use this book are urged to enrich their local celebrations with signs, symbols, gestures, music, and whatever practices are appropriate to enhance the spirit of prayer of their worshiping community. In this way this new Ritual will be an effective means for our worldwide Franciscan Family, for each local community and for every individual Franciscan to achieve what Francis desired for us, namely, “to have the Spirit of God at work within them, while they pray to him unceasingly with a heart free from self-interest” (Rule of 1223, 10).

David Eckelkamp, O.F.M. Secretary, Conference of National Spiritual Assistants of the U.S.A. Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, October 4, 1985.

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**TO THE FRANCISCAN FAMILIES**

**OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

At the request of Very Reverend Father Jose Angulo, Minister General of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis, in the name of the Ministers General of the Franciscan Families and of the International Council of the Secular Franciscan Order, by letters issued on the fifth day of October, 1983, by virtue of the faculties given to this Sacred Congregation by the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, we gladly approve or confirm the text of the Ritual of the Secular Franciscan Order written in the Latin language and attached to this decree.

The confirmation granted by the Apostolic See is to be mentioned in the printed text. Moreover, two samples of the same printed text are to be forwarded to this Sacred Congregation.

Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

From the offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, on the ninth day of March 1984, in the Jubilee Year of the Redemption.



Joseph Cardinal Casoria

Prefect

+ Vergilius Noe

Titular Archbishop of Voncaria

Secretary

**Part I**

**Rites for Entering the Secular Franciscan Order**

***NB:*** *The numbering here in this “****Preface*** *to the Ritual is different than in the Brown Book with the large purple Tau. The Editors of the “Trilogy” have found the numbering in the edition with the large purple Tau far too confusing and have renumbered this preface. Remember this if you are making a reference to the Preface of the Ritual from this book.*

**Preface**

**I The Nature of Profession**

**in the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS)**

1.1 Many men and women, married and single, and many members of the diocesan clergy are called by God to follow the way of perfection of the gospel life after the example and manner of Francis of Assisi, to share his charism, and to make it present in the world. They promise to follow Jesus Christ and to live the gospel in fraternity by entering the Secular Franciscan Order. In this way, they manifest the priceless gift of Baptism and realise it in a fuller and more fruitful way.

1.2 The Church has always esteemed highly this form of life prompted by the Holy Spirit *“for the good of the Church and the human community.”*[[91]](#footnote-91)By means of the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV, Leo XIII, and Paul VI, the Church has made sure that this form of life is suitably adapted to her needs and expectations in the conditions of changing times.

1.3 The Secular Franciscans, gathered together in fraternity and in oneness of spirit with all the People of God, celebrate the mystery of salvation, revealed and communicated to us in Christ, with prayers and thanksgiving and by renewing their commitment to a new life.

**II The Normative Character of the OFS Ritual and its Adaptation**

2.1 The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy from Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, states: *“Provided that the substantial unity of the Roman Rite is maintained, the revision of liturgical books should allow for legitimate variations and adaptations to different groups, regions, and peoples, especially in mission lands.”*[[92]](#footnote-92) In accord with this criterion, the Secular Franciscan fraternities scattered throughout the whole world, conscious that experience itself has a specific value, want to continue to bring to completion in any people and in any given culture the mystery of the Incarnate Word, the Saviour of all people.[[93]](#footnote-93)

2.2 The rites and prayers presented in these celebrations are inspired by the tradition of the Secular Franciscan fraternity and by the rituals being used experimentally in the various nations. They need to be adapted to the mentality and to the different circumstances of the fraternities scattered in so many parts of the world.

2.3 It is the task of the OFS National Councils particularly to carry out this work of adaptation.

2.4 Let it be emphasised that the rites which refer to admission and permanent commitment (profession) are to be taken as normative with regard to the essential elements, which will be indicated as such in each rite. In other words, the text of the Ritual is not necessarily to be used just as and only as printed; it must be adapted to the situations of the community using it, as long as the essential elements constituting a valid admission and profession find a meaningful and faithful expression.

2.5 The OFS Ritual should manifest the gift of the spirit proper to the Secular Franciscan Order and also its commitment to the gospel life, in a way that is suitable for any nation and in any cultural context.

2.6 On the one hand, this implies the assimilation of the valid cultural elements of each region, and, on the other hand, it presumes fidelity to the Secular Franciscan vocation and to its universality, that is, to unity among all the fraternities and the oneness of the fraternities with the Church. So, the Ritual has to contain a commonness with the Secular Franciscan Order everywhere in the world while expressing the particular character of a nation or culture.

**III. The Rites That Accompany the Steps of OFS Life**

3.1 The steps by which the new members and the candidates are incorporated into the Secular Franciscan Order after a period of inquiry and preparation are: (1) the time of formation or candidacy for at least one year, and (2) the permanent commitment to gospel life or “profession” of the Rule. In their ritual expression, these steps are preceded by a ceremony of welcoming. Furthermore, the renewal of commitment, either as part of temporary commitment or in celebration of a jubilee, is added to these basic steps.

3.2 The whole fraternity is involved in this gradual journey or ongoing process of growth both by the witness of its manner of living and by its participation in the liturgical rites.

3.3 Through the Spiritual Assistant and the President (Minister) who represents the Fraternity, the Church accepts the commitment and the profession of those who profess the rule and life of the Secular Franciscan Order. By her public prayer, the Church entreats the help and grace of God for them. She imparts her blessing over them and accompanies their commitment or profession with the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

***Ceremony of Welcoming***

3.4 The ceremony of welcoming at the beginning of the period of inquiry is a simple and para-liturgical expression of the community’s interest in the newcomers and its support for their searching out the Secular Franciscan vocation.

3.5 It does not take place within the context of a ritual or liturgical celebration, but rather as part of the fraternal portion of the regular meeting of the community.

***Rite of Admission***

3.6 The rite of admission, which precedes the time of formation or candidacy, should be simple and plain. It is appropriate that this entrance into the Secular Franciscan Order take place within a celebration of the Word of God with the whole fraternity present, and not during the celebration of the Eucharist.

3.7 The normative elements that should be clearly and evidently highlighted for the candidates are the following:

a) the request and the will to experience the gospel life, like Francis of Assisi;

b) having in mind that the request is related to a possible future commitment to live this way of life, with the help of a fraternity, in communion and harmony with the whole Franciscan Family.

3.8 Present at this rite are:

a) the candidates;

b) the OFS Spiritual Assistant or the superior of a Franciscan religious community to which the secular fraternity is especially connected who presides over the liturgical rite. In case of necessity, another priest or religious can be delegated.

c) the President / Minister of the fraternity who receives the new members in the name of the Fraternity Council.[[94]](#footnote-94) The president / Minister should occupy a significant place in the celebration in order to bring out the meaning of the office.

d) the director of formation;

e) the members of the Local Fraternity.

3.9 If for good reasons, the rite of admission is celebrated without the presence of a priest, the president (Minister) presides at the celebration as well as receives the candidates for the time of formation.

3.10 A fraternal social gesture of welcome to the newcomers can precede or follow the rite of entry, as an expression of joy and as a pledge of fraternal support.

***Rite of Profession***

***or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life***

3.11 Since by its very nature profession is a public and ecclesial act; it should be celebrated in the presence of the whole fraternity, *“a visible sign of the Church, the community of love.”*[[95]](#footnote-95) It is fitting that the profession be made during the celebration of the Eucharist or at least within an appropriate celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

3.12 The normative elements of the profession rite, which express the nature of permanent commitment to the gospel life, are:

a) the renewal of one’s consecration and promises at Baptism and Confirmation. This means dedicating oneself to God through his people with all the consequences flowing from it, up to the present moment, in order to live in union with God and to hold firm to his plan of salvation, by means of a consecration that is to be lived in the world (or as diocesan clergy).

b) the desire to live the gospel by following St. Francis of Assisi;

c) definitive incorporation into the Secular Franciscan Order, which is the harmonious union of all the members who promise to live the gospel after the example of St. Francis of Assisi while remaining in their secular vocation either as laity or clergy;

d) the desire to live in the world and for the world. In this regard, profession aims to be a gospel leaven and also a commitment to collaborate in building a more fraternal world.[[96]](#footnote-96) Members of the diocesan clergy by their profession confirm the appropriate pledges and promises of their specific episcopal, presbyteral or diaconal vocation.

e) the desire to live the gospel for the whole of one’s life. This dimension is the expression of a person’s generosity in sharing the fullness of one’s innermost being, and also the acceptance of the risks that are inseparable from any human choice that is so permanent and important.

f) the candidate’s confidence, supported by the help of the OFS Rule and the fraternity. The candidate will feel led and helped by the Rule approved by the Church and will experience the joy of sharing the journey of gospel life with the other members, from whom one can receive something and to whom a person can give something. Being incorporated into the Local Fraternity, which is an integral part of the Church, the candidate will contribute toward rebuilding the whole Church.

3.13 The elements considered above may be united in a single formula of profession or may even be expressed in the form of a dialogue. Some of these fundamental concepts, such as service of God and of his Church, simply cannot be expressed explicitly or adequately in a formula, since they are repeated constantly throughout the whole celebration, or they may always be presupposed in the very act of commitment to gospel life.

3.14 The commitment to the gospel life is received by the president (Minister) in the name of the Church and of the Fraternity. The priest presides over this rite as the witness of the Church’s hierarchy and of the Franciscan Family.

3.15 In exceptional circumstances, when a lack of priests calls for it or makes it necessary, the candidates pronounce their profession before the Fraternity. The President (Minister) of the Fraternity presides at the celebration of the Word (or has another preside) and also receives the profession, while the professed members of the fraternity act as witnesses.

***Rite of Temporary Commitment to the Gospel Life***

***(and Annual Renewal)***

3.16 Profession or permanent commitment can be preceded and prepared for by a temporary promise or commitment, renewed annually, but not extended beyond three years since it is a preparation for final commitment.

3.17 This option is offered for pedagogical reasons, namely, to facilitate a suitable and gradual formation and entry of members into the Secular Franciscan Order. For that reason, the renewal is made with the same frame of mind in order to respond to the goal of this pedagogical preparation.

3.18 The rite of annual renewal can be performed in a celebration of the Word of God with a very simple formula, but ordinarily not within the context of the Eucharist, since this is reserved for one’s permanent and final commitment. The readings and the whole rite may be arranged to suit the circumstances. If it is performed in some kind of liturgical celebration, the celebrant may give a short homily.

***Jubilee Ceremony***

3.19 This ceremony celebrates the fidelity to the gospel life and the OFS Rule of those members observing their 25th or 50th anniversary in the Secular Franciscan Order.

3.20 It is a simple and joyous ceremony ordinarily incorporated into a Mass of Thanksgiving or other appropriate liturgical celebration.

**IV. Notes for Liturgical Practice**

4.1 A liturgical celebration expresses and brings about the most profound religious sentiments within a person. In an intense and concentrated moment, the reality of one’s faith-experience is made present. Hence, a good liturgical event presupposes dignity, order, and reverence, on the one hand, and, on the other, the personal touch of sincerity and involvement.

4.2 So, in planning and celebrating the various rites which follow, it is important to keep in mind some particular observations in order to enhance that liturgical expression.

***The Scripture Readings***

4.3 All Scripture texts are taken from the Jerusalem Bible, and all psalms come from the Grail Psalmody because these are universally accepted translations in all of the English-speaking countries. Of course, it is to be understood that any other approved translation may be substituted for the text given.

4.4 According to the situation, other suitable and similar readings may be chosen instead of the ones indicated. They may be taken from the Scripture Readings given in Appendix I.1., or from the Roman Lectionary.

***The Prayers and Formulae***

4.5 Except for the formula for profession or permanent commitment, which should be used basically in the form given, all the other formulae and prayers presented in the text are to be considered as models to guide those planning the ceremonies in providing a ritual expression that is both common to the whole Secular Franciscan Order and suited to the local circumstances or to the particular people involved. The adaptation of the given texts is encouraged.

4.6 To signify the importance and the personal character of the event, it is especially recommended that the inquirers and the candidates formulate their own statements of intent for the rite of admission and the rite of profession respectively, in accord with the models presented.

***The Liturgical Setting***

4.7 Each of the parties in a liturgical celebration has his or her particular function; this is all the more true when an event like admission or profession is solemnized through ritual. Special care should be taken that the various participants perform their own proper role and do so only after sufficient preparation and guidance.

4.8 It must always be remembered that a ritual occasion is also a communal event. The whole community should be able to participate as fully as possible not only through its appropriate responses but also by being able to see the proceedings clearly. The participants, then, need to make sure that they position themselves before the community so that they are most visible.

4.9 The gradual movement toward permanent commitment in the Secular Franciscan Order is expressed and realised not only by the actual rite but also through the appropriate liturgical context within which that rite is celebrated. Since the Eucharist is the high point and peak experience of Christ’s sacrificial self-giving and our communion with the Lord, it is expected that this context be reserved for one’s permanent commitment to the gospel life in profession, and that the other rites occur during a celebration of the Word of God or the Liturgy of the Hours.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Ceremony of Introduction   
and Welcoming**

At the beginning of the time of inquiry, it is appropriate for the newcomers to be introduced and welcomed into the community.

This is not a liturgical rite as much as it is the fraternity’s expression of hospitality and cordiality. Hence, the ceremony should not take place during the community’s time for liturgy or prayer, but rather during the “chapter” or “renewal of life” portion of the regular meeting when the ongoing formation and socialising occur.

The ceremony is to be kept as simple as possible. It begins with the professed member of the fraternity responsible for bringing the newcomer to the community introducing him/her in these or similar words:

**May I introduce to all of you N.N. from ………….., who**

**has expressed an interest in our Franciscan way of life.**

Then the professed member may want to tell the community something about the newcomer.

This process is repeated for each of the newcomers. When all of the inquirers have been introduced, one of their number (or all of them together) states the purpose of their inquiry. It is more fitting that one’s own words are used, but the speaker may also say these or similar words:

**We (I) have come to see in your Franciscan life a way that appeals to us (me). So we (I) would like to inquire into that way and learn more about it. Perhaps in time we (I), by the grace of God, may be able to become part of the Secular Franciscan Order and thus come to serve the Lord and his people more faithfully.**

In the name of the Fraternity, the Minister responds in his/her own words or in such a manner:

**On behalf of this Fraternity, I warmly welcome you, and I note your desire to inquire into the Secular Franciscan way of life. Be assured that in your search, you will have the support and the encouragement of our prayer, our formation, and our example. And always keep in mind the words of St. Francis to Brother Leo: “In whatever way you think will best please our Lord God and follow in his footsteps and in poverty, take that way with the Lord God’s blessing.”**

Then the formation director presents the inquirer(s) with a short life of St. Francis, saying in these or similar words:

**Take this life of St. Francis and read it carefully, in order to learn how to live the gospel life of our Lord Jesus Christ by following his example.**

The welcoming concludes with a prayer offered by the Spiritual Assistant or by one of the secular members of the fraternity. The prayer may be extemporaneous or may be taken from a liturgical text or from the writings of St. Francis. Also, the following may be used as a model for that prayer:

**O Lord our God,**

**you have shown us your wisdom and love,**

**and you have called us to follow you.**

**May the person(s) here present**

**inquiring into the Secular Franciscan Order**

**be inspired and strengthened**

**by your grace and the support of this community.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

The whole community expresses its sentiments in the customary fashion.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Rite of Admission**

It is fitting that the rite of admission take place within an appropriate celebration of the Word of God, but not during the Mass. The rite is to be kept simple and is to be performed before the community (see Preface, 3.6).

Before the celebration is about to begin, one of the members of the fraternity may give a short admonition on the meaning of the event. It is appropriate that the text be specially composed for the occasion; the following thoughts may be used as a model:

**The Lord has called us to live the gospel way of life in fraternity, as he showed it to Francis of Assisi. He brings us together today to receive those who, moved by the Holy Spirit, have asked to be admitted into the Secular Franciscan Order and want to begin their time of formation, which will culminate in their profession or permanent commitment to the gospel life. We will now renew our faith in the Holy Spirit and call on him: May he give us the grace to encourage and sustain their proper formation and to walk with them to attain their goal.**

**Opening Rite**

The rite of admission then begins with a suitable hymn. After the hymn, the Spiritual Assistant or the celebrant makes the Sign of the Cross and greets the community. He then says in these or similar words:

**Let us acknowledge the presence of God   
and turn to him in prayer. (Pause)**

**Lord our God,**

**you have sent your son, Jesus Christ,**

**to be for us the way, the truth, and the life.**

**Grant that these your people**

**who are asking to be admitted**

**into the Secular Franciscan Order,**

**and all of us,**

**may hear the words of the Gospel fully**

**and may observe them attentively.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord**.

All: **Amen**.

**Liturgy of the Word**

Before the first reading these words of exhortation of St. Francis may be read from the Letter to All the Faithful (14, 2-3)

**Let us hear the Word of God in the spirit of our blessed father Francis who encourages us:**

**In that love which is God, I beg and implore you to hear these fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love, putting them into practice with all gentleness and observing them perfectly.**

First Reading (Rom 6:3-11. “Let us live a new life”)

**A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Romans:**

**You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glory, we too might live a new life.**

**If in union with Christ, we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin. When a man dies, of course, he has finished with sin.**

**But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him anymore. When he died, he died, once for all, to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.**

**This is the Word of the Lord.**

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 23[24]; 1-2, 3-4, 5-6)

**R.** **Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face.**

The Lord’s is the earth and its fullness,

the world and all its peoples.

It is he who set it on the seas;

on the waters, he made it firm. **R.**

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?

Who shall stand in his holy place?

The man with clean hands and pure heart,

who desires not worthless things,

who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbour. **R.**

He shall receive a blessing from the Lord   
and reward from the God who saves him.   
Such are the men who seek him,   
seek the face of the God of Jacob. **R.**

Verse Before the Gospel (Phil 3:8-9)

**I count all things worthless but this:   
to gain Jesus Christ and to be found in him.**

Second Reading (Mark 1:12-15. “Repent, and believe the Good News”)

**A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to Mark:**

**The Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness,**

**and he remained there for forty days**

**and was tempted by Satan.**

**He was with the wild beasts,**

**and the angels looked after him.**

**After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the Good News from God.**

**“The time has come,” he said,**

**“and the kingdom of God is close at hand.**

**Repent, and believe the Good News.”**

**This is the Gospel of the Lord.**

The celebrant gives a brief homily. According to circumstances, he can invite the participants to share their reflections on the Word of God.

**Rite of Admission**

One of the candidates in the name of all (or all together or even each one separately) expresses the desire to enter the Secular Franciscan Order. The Minister receives the request in the name of the Fraternity. This can be done in the form of a dialogue, either in a manner especially composed for the situation or in these or similar words:

*Director of Formation:*

**Would those who are asking to be admitted into the Secular Franciscan Order please come forward, namely, N.N.**

Minister:

**My friends** (or calling them by name),

**what is your request?**

Candidate(s):

**We (I) here present ask to enter this Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order, so that we (I) may live more intensely and faithfully the grace and dedication of our (my) Baptism by following Jesus Christ according to the teachings and example of St. Francis of Assisi. In this way, we (I) intend to be of service to all through our (my) secular state of life for the glory of God and to fulfil his plan of love on behalf of all people.**

Minister-perhaps with some appropriate gesture-says:

**This Fraternity is pleased to accept your request. I, therefore, receive you into the Secular Franciscan Order so that you may begin your time of formation and experience our Franciscan life in preparation for your permanent commitment.**

*Celebrant:*

The Church and the Franciscan Family accept and confirm your sincere intention. May the Lord allow you to persevere in this desire and to be a leaven of gospel life within the world.

*The Whole Community:*

**Thanks be to God!**

**Blessed are those who love the Lord with their whole heart,**

**with their whole soul and mind,**

**with all their strength,**

**and love their neighbours as themselves.**

**Blessed are those who despise the ways of the flesh**

**with their vices and sins,**

**and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

**Blessed are those who produce worthy fruits of penance.**

**Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women**

**when they do these things and persevere in doing them,**

**because “the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them.”**

**and he will make “his home and dwelling among them.”**

**And they are children of the heavenly Father,**

**whose work they do,**

**And they are spouses, brothers, and mother**

**of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (See: I Letter to All the Faithful, 1-7.)

It is appropriate for the whole community to express its sentiments in the customary fashion.

**Presentation of the Rule of Life**

While the director of formation presents a copy of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order to each of the newly admitted candidates, the Minister says in these or similar words:

**The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans 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 with people. May this too be your way of life.**

While the director of formation or another member of the fraternity presents to each of the candidates the distinctive sign of the Secular Franciscan Order (National Statutes), the Minister says in these or similar words:

**As you turn toward Christ in the spirit of St. Francis, receive this sign of the Secular Franciscan Order and become one with us.**

The General Intercessions, the Lord’s Prayer and a concluding prayer (perhaps taken from the writings of St. Francis) follow.

Then the Minister of the Fraternity addresses the new members of the fraternity. He/She may use a text particularly prepared for the occasion or these or similar words:

**N.N., the Secular Franciscan Fraternity of ……………….**

**very gladly promises to help you in your journey with friendship, prayer, and the witness of its life. You, on the other hand, strengthen our Fraternity in numbers, by virtue of your presence and participation, and through the sharing of your special gifts. You are most welcome!**

All the members exchange a sign of peace, especially with the newly admitted candidates. Meanwhile, a suitable hymn is sung.

**Blessing**

The rite concludes with the blessing of St. Francis:

**The Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**

All: **Amen.**

**May the Lord bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen**

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment**

**to the Gospel Life Within the Mass**

This rite is to be used only for the permanent and definitive commitment of the candidates. If a temporary commitment is to be made at the conclusion of the time of formation, the rite in Chapter

Four is to be used.

The rite described in this chapter is celebrated during the Mass because the nature of permanent commitment as a public and ecclesial act is closely tied to the celebration of the Eucharist (Preface, 3.11).

The Mass formula to be used may correspond to the liturgy of the day or, if the rubrics permit, the votive Mass of St. Francis, of St. Louis the King or St. Elizabeth of Hungary; or the Mass for the Laity may also be chosen. With regard to the hymns and exhortations during the celebration, the text of Chapter Two of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order should be kept in mind, as well as the biblical texts that support the OFS way of life.

All that is necessary for celebrating the Eucharist and for the rite of profession is to be adequately prepared beforehand.

The Minister of the Fraternity receives the profession at a suitable place in the sanctuary, while either sitting or standing. Places for those to be professed are to be arranged in the sanctuary so that the whole liturgical action can be clearly seen by the whole congregation.

Before the celebrant is about to begin, one of the members of the fraternity may give a short admonition on the meaning of the event. It is appropriate that the text be specially composed for the occasion; the following thoughts may be used as a model:

**We are assembled as a community to take part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In this celebration of the Eucharist N.N. are (is) going to make their (his/her) profession of the gospel life in the Secular Franciscan Order. In doing so, they (he/she) make(s) present again and renew(s) the promises of their (his/her) Baptism and the commitment of their (his/her) Confirmation.**

**While giving thanks to the Father through Christ for all the gifts we have received from him, we have a special reason for gratitude today: the gift of his grace which he has given to those (the one) about to be professed to live in the world according to the spirit of the Beatitudes, and also the gift of his grace which he has given to the whole community by adding (a) new member(s) to the fraternity.**

**The permanent commitment to the gospel life publically proclaimed today during this celebration reminds us of something which is also made present every day in the Eucharist: After the example of Christ and in union with his own act of thanksgiving, we are to present ourselves before the Father as living sacrifices of praise given for the life of the world.**

**Entrance Rite**

The entrance hymn of the Mass is sung while the priest proceeds to the altar. Those to be professed, along with the Minister of the Fraternity and the director of formation, arrange themselves in the sanctuary in the places designated for them. Then the Mass begins. It might be appropriate to amplify the Penitential Rite in order to highlight the pervading spirit of penance, which is characteristic of commitment in the Secular Franciscan Order.

**Liturgy of the Word**

Everything is done as usual in the Liturgy of the Word, with the exception that:

a. The readings can be taken either from the Mass of the day or from the Scripture Readings offered in Appendix I. 1.

b. The Creed, even if part of the rubrics for the day, is to be omitted because a profession is in itself a special creedal statement.

**Rite of Profession or Permanent Commitment to the Gospel Life**

*Request*

After the reading of the Gospel, the celebrant and the people sit. Those who are to be professed are called forward, and the Minister of the fraternity invites them to express their intention publicly. This may be done in the form of a dialogue between the Minister and the candidates, who express their intent either singly (each in one’s own words), by means of one speaking in the name of all or by all speaking together.

*Director of Formation:*

**Would the candidates for profession in the Secular Franciscan Order please come forward, namely N.N.**

(Each candidate may respond with:

**“I am ready and willing”** or **“Present”** when called.)

*Minister:*

**N.N., God, has consecrated you with water and the Holy Spirit. What do you now ask of God, the Church, and the Franciscan Family?**

The candidates present their intention. It is most appropriate that each candidate speaks in his/her own words, especially from a text particularly composed for the occasion. The individual candidates or one in the name of all or all the candidates together may use a common formula, using the following as a model:

**We(I) ask to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life. The experience during our (my) time of formation has strengthened us(me) in the conviction that the Lord is calling us(me) to observe the holy gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ by following the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.**

Minister:

**The fraternity accepts your petition and is united with you in your prayer. May the Holy Spirit confirm in you the work he has begun.**

**The community acknowledges its assent in the customary fashion.**

*Homily or Talk*

Those to be professed are seated, and a homily is given. The biblical readings, as well as the commitment to the gospel life and its theological implications, are fittingly explained.

*Questioning*

After the homily, those to be professed stand. The celebrant questions them about their intent in these or similar words:

Celebrant:

**Before this fraternity and the other members of the People of God gathered here, I ask you to express your will.**

**Do you wish to embrace the gospel way of life by following the example and words of St. Francis of Assisi, which are at the heart of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order?**

*Candidates, replying all together:*

**Yes, this is what I want.**

*Celebrant:*

**You have been called to give witness to the Kingdom of God and to build a more fraternal world based on the gospel, together with all people of goodwill. Do you wish to be faithful to this vocation and to practice the spirit of service proper to Secular Franciscans?**

Candidates:

**Yes, this is what I want.**

*Celebrant:*

**You have been made members of the People of God by your Baptism, and strengthened in Confirmation by the new gift of the Spirit, in order to proclaim Christ by your life and your words. Do you wish to bind yourself more closely to the Church and to work intently to rebuild the ecclesial community and fulfil its mission among all people?**

Candidates:

**Yes, this is what I want.**

The Minister of the fraternity says in these or similar words:

**The local fraternity is a visible sign of the Church, a community of faith and love. Together with all the members, you now pledge yourselves to spend your efforts to make the fraternity a genuine ecclesial assembly and a living Franciscan community.**

*Prayer for Divine Grace*

Then the celebrant prays for divine help saying:

**Let us pray.**

All kneel. And in a manner customary to the community, a special time of prayer is observed, using perhaps one of the following:

a. a period of silence,

b. an invocation of the Holy Spirit,

c. a shortened or adapted form of the litany of Franciscan saints, or

d. a common prayer, particularly composed for the occasion or similar to the following:

**O Lord our God,**

**your grace has led these, your servants**

**to live their faith more fully**

**in the context of this world**

**by coming to profess the gospel**

**according to the life and rule**

**of the Secular Franciscan Order.**

**By the power of your Holy Spirit**

**may they give witness**

**to the life and teachings of your Son**

**to all the world.**

**Grant that they may be continually united to Christ**

**through the gifts of their lives,**

**in order that the Church may be rebuilt**

**and her mission be fulfilled**

**through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

Then the celebrant concludes by saying in these or similar words:

**Lord, watch over these, your servants.**

**May the Spirit of your love penetrate their hearts,**

**so that your grace will strengthen them**

**to keep their commitment to the gospel life.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

*Profession or Commitment to the Gospel Life*

While the celebrant remains at the presidential chair, the Minister of the fraternity takes a suitable central place in the sanctuary, either standing or sitting.

Two professed members of the fraternity stand beside the Minister of the fraternity, acting as special witnesses.

Those to be professed approach the Minister one at a time and read the formula of profession, placing their hands, if so desired, into the hands of the Minister:

**I, N.N.,**

**by the grace of God,**

**renew my baptismal promises**

**and consecrate myself to the service of his Kingdom.**

**Therefore, in my secular state**

(or, when appropriate, as a member of the diocesan clergy)

**I promise to live**

**all the days of my life**

**the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**in the Secular Franciscan Order**

**by observing its rule of life.**

**May the grace of the Holy Spirit,**

**the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

**and our holy father St. Francis,**

**and the fraternal bonds of community**

**always be my help,**

**so that I may reach the goal**

**of perfect Christian love.**

To each one, the Minister responds:

**Thanks be to God!**

**As Minister of this fraternity,**

**I accept your profession**

**and receive you into this fraternity of…………………**

**of the Secular Franciscan Order.**

**Your membership in the fraternity**

**is a cause of great joy and hope**

**for all the members of the community**

**and for the whole Church.**

When all the candidates have made their profession, and the Minister has accepted it, the celebrant speaks to them in these or similar words:

**I confirm your commitment in the name of the Church.**

**Our seraphic father himself encourages you**

**in the words of his Testament:**

**“May whoever observes all this**

**be filled in heaven with the blessing**

**of the most high Father,**

**and on earth with that of his beloved Son,**

**together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,**

**and all the powers of heaven and all the saints.”**

Presentation of Symbols of Profession

While the formation director gives to each newly professed a copy of the Holy Gospels, the Minister says in these or similar words:

**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. By your lifelong profession to go from gospel to life and life to the gospel, may you continually encounter the living and active person of Christ.**

Where customary, a crucifix may also be presented as a remembrance of profession. The one presenting the crucifix (ideally a San Damiano Cross) may say in these or similar words:

**May you conform your thoughts and deeds to those of Christ and build a more fraternal and evangelical world by fulfilling your vocation as a “brother (sister) of penance.”**

Where it is also customary to present the newly professed with a lighted candle and/or with a Franciscan ring, the one giving the symbols may say in these or similar words:

For the candle—

**By your profession, you are the light of Christ in the world. Your light must shine before all so that they may see goodness in your acts and give praise to your heavenly Father.**

For the ring—

**You have been made a living member of the Church in Baptism; you have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Through this special covenant of union, may you be a faithful witness and instrument of her mission among all people.**

After all the presentations, the members present may come forward to congratulate each newly professed with an appropriate sign of peace and goodwill. Meanwhile, a suitable hymn may be sung.

*Conclusion of the Rite of Profession*

The rite concludes with the General Intercessions. These may be prepared and presented by representatives of the whole fraternity.

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

While a hymn is sung at the Presentation of the Gifts, some of the newly professed members may appropriately present the bread, wine, and water for the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Other symbols signifying the commitment to the gospel life within the Secular Franciscan Order may also be presented.

Where appropriate, it is fitting to mention the newly professed by name in the Eucharistic Prayer, according to a formula similar to that used at religious professions.

At Communion, it is recommended that the Eucharist be received under both species.

At the end of the Mass, the Solemn Blessing may be similar in form to those given for formula A, and formula B of the Mass for Religious Profession or it may be the traditional blessing of St. Francis:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**

All: **Amen.**

**May almighty God bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**Rite of Temporary Commitment to the Gospel Life**

**(and Annual Renewal)**

This rite for temporary commitment is used after the time of formation and for the annual renewal of that commitment.

At least the Minister of the fraternity and two witnesses must be present. It is very appropriate, however, that the whole fraternity take part in this rite as much as possible.

The rite is to be performed within some kind of liturgical celebration and in a very simple way (see Preface, 3.18). It is not recommended that this rite take place during the Eucharist.

If the rite is performed within a celebration of the Word of God, the readings may be taken from Appendix I. 1.

**Admonition Before the Rite**

Before the celebrant proceeds to the temporary commitment or its renewal, he addresses those present in these or similar words:

**Moved by the power of the gospel, we all experience the call always to begin again and to bring about a continuing inner conversion, so that we may be conformed to Christ and with him be given over to the service of the Father, and of our brothers and sisters as well. In this journey toward permanent commitment, perseverance is a gift of God. Let us pray, therefore, that, as we make progress in loving one another, we will remain faithful to the end.**

After a moment of silence, all reply:

**O Lord,**

**look kindly upon those whom you have called**

**to the holiness of gospel life**

**in the Secular Franciscan Order.**

**Grant them the grace**

**to fulfil their commitment to the gospel life**

**which they have embraced with spirit and generosity.**

**This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

*Temporary Commitment and Its Renewal*

Those making or renewing temporary commitment approach the Minister of the fraternity, saying:

**I, N.N.,**

**make (or renew) for one year**

**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.**

The Minister responds to each one in these or similar words:

**As the Minister of the fraternity, I accept your temporary commitment (or renewal of commitment) to the gospel life. All our brothers and sisters unite with you in thanking God for this gift.**

When all the commitments have been made, the celebrant adds these words of St. Francis:

**May whoever observes all this**

**be filled in heaven with the blessing**

**of the most high Father,**

**and on earth with that of his beloved Son,**

**together with the Holy Spirit, the Comforter,**

**and all the powers of heaven and all the saints.**

**Conclusion of the Rite**

The rite concludes with the General Intercessions, the Lord’s Prayer, and the following prayer by the celebrant:

**Hear our prayers, O Lord,**

**and grant that these, our brothers and sisters,**

**who spend their daily lives**

**in the service of others,**

**may imbue their earthly affairs**

**with a genuine gospel spirit.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

The rite may fittingly end with the Blessing of St. Francis:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.

All: **Amen.**

May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.

All: **Amen.**

**May the Lord bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**Ceremony on the   
Anniversary of Profession**

It is a praiseworthy custom to celebrate the 25th and the 50th anniversary of profession in the Secular Franciscan Order, both to congratulate the jubilarians for their fidelity and dedication and also to strengthen the bonds of fraternal life within the community.

If this jubilee is celebrated within the context of the Eucharist, the Mass corresponding to the liturgy of the day may be said, with the prayers “In Thanksgiving,” according to the rubrics. Also, the votive Mass of St. Francis, of the patron saints of the Secular Franciscan Order, or the Mass for Laity may be used.

The Jubilee may also take place during the Liturgy of the Hours or a special celebration of the Word of God.

**Admonition after the Homily**

After the homily, the Minister of the fraternity or one of the other members present introduces the jubilee ceremony. It would be appropriate to compose a special text for the occasion using the following as a model:

**Today with great joy we are celebrating the 25th (and/or 50th) anniversary of N.N. in the Secular Franciscan Order. During these years, they have made a sincere effort “to make present the charism of their common seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church” and to build “a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.” Let us, therefore, join in their thanksgiving and in their commitment to an ongoing change of heart.**

**Renewal of Commitment**

The jubilarians come forward to renew their commitment, either singly or as a group. It would be appropriate if a particular statement of renewal were composed, using the following as a model:

**“Let us bless our Lord and God, living and true;**

**to him, we must attribute**

**all praise, glory, honour, blessing,**

**and every good forever.”**

**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.”**

**“All praise be yours, O Lord,**

**through all that you have made.” Amen.**

After the renewal of commitment, the celebrant offers a prayer. He may use a text especially composed for the occasion, or he may say in these or similar words:

**Lord our God, Father of all,**

**we thank you for the love and goodwill   
that you have shown toward your people.   
And so we ask you to help our brothers and sisters**

**who today celebrate their anniversaries**

**in the Secular Franciscan Order**

**to fulfil their commitment to the gospel life**

**which they once took upon themselves.**

**“Most high, all powerful, all good, Lord!**

**All praise is yours, all glory, all honour, and all blessing.”**

**forever and ever.**

All: **Amen.**

**Conclusion**

Where time and circumstances permit, the members of the fraternity—or at least some representatives of the fraternity—come forward to offer the jubilarians their congratulations and best wishes. Meanwhile, it is appropriate that a song of thanksgiving and praise be sung, especially St. Francis’ “Canticle of the Creatures.”

The liturgical celebration continues in the usual manner. If the anniversaries are celebrated within the context of the Eucharist, it is fitting that the jubilarians are involved in the General Intercessions, in the Preparation of the Gifts, etc.

**Part II**

**Prayers for**

**Fraternity Meetings**

**Preface**

Local fraternity gatherings, as well as meetings of Regional, National and International Councils, are held in the Secular Franciscan Order.

The goals of these gatherings and meetings are indicated in the Rule, namely, to promote charity among the members and to foster their Franciscan and ecclesial life.[[97]](#footnote-97)

There are different kinds of gatherings within the Fraternity: sometimes for prayer, other times for planning work or accomplishing projects, and still other occasions for fraternising and socialising.

The following gatherings of the fraternity are required by statute:

a. a time for getting to know one another as brothers and sisters,[[98]](#footnote-98)

b. a time for hearing the Word of God and sharing it,[[99]](#footnote-99)

c. a time for study and work, especially ongoing formation and the apostolate,[[100]](#footnote-100)

d. a time for the liturgical celebration of the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours.[[101]](#footnote-101)

In all of these, there is ample room for the creative initiative of the Council and members of the fraternities.

The prayers given here are taken mainly from the writings of St. Francis. The suggested formats are not absolute, but rather are given to help the Council apply their creative energies.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Opening and Closing Prayers   
for Fraternity Meetings**

The prayers suggested below are given only as samples. According to the needs or personality of the fraternity, other prayers may be used. It is always appropriate that the fraternity meeting contain a liturgical celebration, whether the Eucharist or the Liturgy of the Hours.

**Opening Prayers**

When the members have gathered together in a suitable place before any business is taken up, the Minister of the fraternity may begin the community prayer in a manner similar to this:

Minister:

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

Minister:

**Most high, all-powerful, good God,**

**praise, glory, and honour, and all blessing are yours.**

**All: Praise and bless my Lord, and give him thanks, and serve him with great humility.**

Minister:

**Let us pray** (Pause)

**All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God,**

**all good, supreme good, total good,**

**you who alone are good:**

**we give you all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honour,**

**all blessing and every good. So be it. So be it.**

All: **Amen.**

or:

**Let us pray.** (Pause)

**Most high, glorious God,**

**enlighten the darkness of our hearts**

**and give us right faith, firm hope, and perfect charity,**

**with wisdom and insight, O Lord,**

**that we may accomplish your holy and true will.**

All: **Amen.**

A short reading can follow with texts from Sacred Scripture (Appendix I. 1), or from the writings of St. Francis (Appendix I. 2).

The fraternity meeting continues in the usual fashion.

**Closing Prayers**

At the end of the fraternity meeting, after a period of shared prayer or General Intercessions for the general needs of the Church and the particular needs of the fraternity, the Minister of the fraternity may use one of the following prayers of St. Francis, or another of his/her own choice, to close the meeting:

**Let us pray.**

**Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God:**

**grant us in our misery**

**that we may do for your sake alone**

**what we know you want us to do,**

**and always want what pleases you;**

**so that, cleansed and enlightened interiorly**

**and fired with the flame of the Holy Spirit,**

**we may be able to follow in the footsteps of your Son,**

**our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**and so make our way to you, Most High,**

**by your grace alone,**

**you who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,**

**and are glorified, God all-powerful, forever and ever.**

All: **Amen.**

or:

**Let us pray.**

**Most generous God,**

**you are the giver of peace and the lover of charity;**

**grant to us, your people, true harmony with your will,**

**and help us to overcome all temptations**

**that could disturb our peace.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

If a priest is present, he may give the Blessing of St. Francis to Brother Leo:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**

All: **Amen.**

**May the Lord bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

**CHAPTER TWO**

**Prayer for the Regular Meeting of the Council**

The following suggested format may be adapted to the needs or desires of the fraternity Council.

Minister:

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

Minister:

**May the Lord be in our hearts and on our lips,**

**so that we may live the holy gospel**

**of our Lord Jesus Christ**

**in the spirit of St. Francis and proclaim it to all the world.**

All: **Amen.**

Minister:

**Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful people.**

All: **Enkindle in us the spirit of dedication and unity.**

Minister:

**Confirm, O Lord, the work you are doing through us.**

All: **May we be instruments of peace in your Church and in the world.**

Minister:

**Let us pray.** (*Pause, then say together:*)

**O Lord, you have called us**

**to serve the Secular Franciscan Fraternity as its leaders.**

**Through our good example, wise decisions,**

**and courageous action**

**may we faithfully animate and guide our fraternity**

**in observing the gospel in the spirit of St. Francis.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

**Sacred Scripture:** A reading from Sacred Scripture or from the Writings of St. Francis, follows, after which there may be a silent meditation or a shared reflection which applies the message of the reading to the situation at hand.

**The Ordinary Business** of the Council now takes place.

**Shared Prayer:** At the end of the meeting, Shared Prayer or General Intercessions, can assist in praying about the matters dealt with during the meeting.

**The Our Father:** The Minister of the fraternity initiates the Our Father and then concludes with a prayer from the writings of St. Francis (see the Opening and Closing Prayers for Fraternity Meetings) or says in these or similar words:

**Let us pray.** (*Pause, then say together:*)

**O God, without you, nothing is strong, nothing is holy.**

**Inspire us with your wisdom and love.**

**Under your direction and guidance**

**may we prove to be worthy leaders of this fraternity;**

**may we see what we should do,**

**and have the courage and perseverance to accomplish it.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

The Spiritual Assistant concludes with a blessing:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**

All. **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**

All: **Amen.**

**May the Lord bless you, + the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

**CHAPTER THREE**

**Celebration of the   
Fraternity’s Chapter of Elections**

These prayers supplant the ordinary prayers for the fraternity meeting.

Ordinarily, the Minister of the higher level of fraternity, or his/her delegate, presides at the elections and confirms them.

After the invocation of the Holy Spirit:

**O Holy Spirit, giver of all things good,**

**grant we beseech thee Your blessings on this election.**

**Help us to make wise choices in the brothers and sisters**

**we choose to lead us into the future.**

**Increase in us faith, hope, and charity and bring forth in all of us**

**the virtues proper to the state in life to which You have called us.**

**Increase in us our love for each other**

**and the ability to see Jesus in all people.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen**

and a short reading from the Sacred Scripture (Appendix I. 1): or from the writings of St. Francis (Appendix I. 2) or from some other appropriate source, with perhaps a reflection or meditation, following. The one presiding at the elections now offers a prayer in these or similar words:

**Almighty, most high and supreme God,**

**Father, holy and just,**

**Lord, King of heaven and earth:**

**we give you thanks for yourself.**

**Of your own will**

**you created all things spiritual and physical,**

**made us in your own image and likeness,**

**and gave us a place in Paradise,**

**through your only Son, in the Holy Spirit.**

**We trust in you, and we ask for your light**

**so that we may choose those**

**who will properly serve our fraternity**

**through their leadership.**

**Help us to select those who are able**

**to animate and guide us**

**by their example, their virtues and prudent decisions,**

**so that the gospel of Jesus in the spirit of St. Francis**

**may come alive in our community.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

The elections follow in accordance with the General Constitutions and the particular Statutes of a National or Regional fraternity.

After each election, that is, of the Minister, vice-Minister, and Council members together, the Secretary of the elections says:

**In the name of Christ. Amen. I announce that the new elected Minister (or Vice-Minister or Council members) of …………………… Fraternity is (are) N.N.**

The newly elected come(s) forward and the one presiding at the elections asks:

**N.N., do you accept this election?**

The newly elected person respond(s):

**Yes, I do.**

The one presiding then says in these or similar words:

**In the name of the Church and the Franciscan Family, I confirm the election of N.N. as the Minister or vice - Minister or Council members) of ……………..Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order.**

At the end of the election process, a hymn of thanksgiving may be sung. The concluding prayers for the election may be said now, or they may be said in the context of a liturgical celebration, after the homily.

The newly elected Minister recites the Creed in the name of the whole Council:

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell; on the third day He arose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty; from there He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.**

All the newly elected Council members give witness together to their Franciscan calling and to their readiness to be of service. Each may use his/her own words, or they may use the following text as a model:

**We, the Council members of……………Fraternity, accept this responsibility and service of leadership. Before Almighty God, we promise to live daily the gospel life in the spirit of our seraphic father St. Francis and to exercise our new ministry to the best of our ability. We ask the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of this fraternity so that together as the Family of Francis we may witness to the gospel, may be instruments of peace, and may build a more fraternal and evangelical world, so that the Kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.**

Afterward, the one presiding at the elections says:

**May the God of hope**

**bring you such joy and peace in your faith**

**that the power of the Holy Spirit**

**will remove all bounds to hope. (Rom 15:13)**

All: **Blessed be God forever.**

The one presiding continues in these or similar words:

**Let us pray for those who have been elected:**

**Through their service of animating**

**and guiding the fraternity,**

**may we all live our faith more deeply,**

**witness to Christ more bravely,**

**and work to prepare the Kingdom of God**

**more enthusiastically.**

After a moment of silence -

all join in a common prayer. It may be one specially composed for the occasion or one modelled on the following:

**Most generous Father, grant**

**that through the dedicated efforts of our new leaders**

**who have been called to serve our fraternity,**

**all of us may know you better,**

**and make you known to all.**

**May we live more vigorously the gospel way of life**

**that you inspired through Francis of Assisi.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

If time and circumstances permit, the newly elected Minister and Council may stand in front of the community, and each member may come forward to offer congratulations. (Photos can be taken at this time.)

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**The Establishment of a New Fraternity**

This rite is to be celebrated in a suitable place, usually the church or chapel associated with the new fraternity.

The one who has the faculty to establish the fraternity canonically, or his delegate, presides at the ceremony.

**Introduction**

After an opening hymn, a word of welcome and a brief introduction from the Minister of the fraternity, Article 22 of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order is read:

**The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order, and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.**

Then the one presiding at the establishment of the new fraternity offers a prayer in these or similar words:

**Let us pray. (Pause)**

**We give you praise and thanks,**

**O Lord our God.**

**As we gather here in your name,**

**may our lives together in fraternity**

**help us to experience the presence of your Son,**

**our Lord Jesus Christ,**

**and to proclaim that presence to the world**

**by the power of your Holy Spirit,**

**so that our joy in St. Francis may come to fulfilment.**

**We ask this through Christ, our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

**Liturgy of the Word**

First Reading (Rom 12:4-13 “We form one body”)

**A reading from the letter of Paul to the Romans:**

**Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it, we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your gift is prophecy, then use it as your faith suggests; if administration, then use it for administration; if teaching, then use it for teaching. Let the preachers deliver sermons, the almsgivers give freely, the officials be diligent, and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully.**

**Do not let your love be a pretence; but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with a great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come, and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need, you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.**

**This is the Word of the Lord.**

Responsorial Psalm (105 [106]: 1, 2-3, 47, 48)

**R. Give thanks to the Lord for he is good:   
for his love is without end.**

Who can tell the Lord’s mighty deeds?   
Who can recount all his praise?   
They are happy who do what is right;   
who at all times, do what is just. **R.**

O Lord, our God, save us!

Gather us from among the nations

that we may thank your holy name

and make it our glory to praise you. **R.**

Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel,   
for ever, from age to age.   
Let all the peoples cry out:   
“Amen!” **R.**

*Verse Before the Gospel (Col 3:15)*

**May the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, that peace to which all of you are called as one body.**

Gospel Reading (John 17:20-26 “That all may be one”)

**A reading from the Holy Gospel, according to John:**

**Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and prayed, saying:**

**“Holy Father,**

**I pray not only for these,**

**but for those also**

**who through their words, will believe in me.**

**May they all be one.**

**Father, may they be one in us,**

**as you are in me and I am in you,**

**so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.**

**I have given them the glory you gave to me,**

**that they may be one as we are one.**

**With me in them and you in me,**

**may they be so completely one**

**that the world will realise that it was you who sent me**

**and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.**

**Father,**

**I want those you have given me**

**to be with me where I am,**

**so that they may always see the glory**

**you have given me**

**because you loved me**

**before the foundation of the world.**

**Father, Righteous One,**

**the world has not known you,**

**but I have known you,**

**and these have known**

**that you have sent me.**

**I have made your name known to them**

**and will continue to make it known,**

**so that the love with which you love me may be in them,**

**and so that I may be in them.”**

**This is the Gospel of the Lord.**

A homily may follow.

**Reading and Signing of the Document of Establishment**

The document of the establishment of the new fraternity is now formally read and signed by the one presiding at the establishment and by the properly designated witnesses.

The one presiding then reads the names of the members of the newly established fraternity, and gives the names of the leaders who constitute the Council of the new fraternity.

Then an exhortation is read from the writings of St. Francis (see Appendix I. 2). For example:

**We are spouses [of our Lord Jesus Christ] when the faithful soul is joined to [Him] by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father, who is in heaven. We are mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and when we give birth to Him through His holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example.**

**Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! O, how holy, consoling, beautiful, and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse! Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave up life for His sheep and who prayed to the Father saying: “O Holy Father, protect those in your name whom you have given to me in the world.”**

*(1 Letter to All the Faithful, 8-14)*

On this occasion, some appropriate words can be offered either by the one presiding at the establishment or by a Regional or National leader present.

**Prayer and Conclusion**

After shared prayer or General Intercessions, the one presiding concludes with a prayer, either composed for the occasion or modelled on the following:

**Our Father, Almighty God, source of love and unity:**

**grant that this new fraternity**

**of the Secular Franciscan Order,**

**united and animated by the Holy Spirit,**

**may be ready to hear your Word and keep it.**

**May all its members pray together**

**with one mind and heart.**

**May they find in the community**

**the strength and inspiration**

**to bring about a more fraternal and evangelical world**

**and to carry the message of joy and peace to everyone.**

**This we ask through Christ our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

The priests present may give their blessing, especially in the form of St. Francis’ blessing to Brother Leo:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you peace.**

All: **Amen.**

**May almighty God bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen**

It is appropriate to conclude with a hymn to Our Lady.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**Prayer for the Pastoral or Fraternal Visit**

At the time of the pastoral or fraternal visit of the fraternity (OFS Rule, art. 26), these prayers would ordinarily supplant the prayers for a regular fraternity meeting.

After the customary greeting and an Invocation of the Holy Spirit, the visitor offers an opening prayer, either in a form particularly prepared for the occasion or one modelled on the following:

**We praise and thank you,**

**O Lord our God,**

**for through your love and wisdom**

**you have called us to holiness**

**through the Franciscan way of life.**

**Through your grace and inspiration**

**you have provided for us the means**

**to promote fidelity to the Franciscan charism,**

**to observe the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order,**

**and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity.**

**By the power of your Holy Spirit**

**we have come together today**

**for this pastoral (and/or fraternal) visit,**

**in order to evaluate our efforts**

**and to renew our dedication**

**to live the holy gospel of your Son**

**in the footsteps of St. Francis.**

**We ask for your blessing and guidance**

**so that this occasion may help us**

**to appreciate our vocation more deeply,**

**to embrace it more enthusiastically,**

**and to share it more fully with one another**

**and with all people.**

**Give us the fullness of your Spirit.**

**Take full possession of our hearts;**

**root out of them attitudes of selfishness and false fear.**

**Give us the will to persevere,**

**as followers of St. Francis in the contemporary world,**

**in rebuilding the Church and**

**in proclaiming the Good News of salvation.**

**Where we have faltered or even failed,**

**give us the strength to begin anew,**

**the light to discover our true meaning and purpose,**

**and the courage to move forward**

**with conviction and humility.**

**“May the power of your love, O Lord,**

**fiery and sweet as honey,**

**wean our hearts from all that is under heaven,**

**so that we may die for love of Jesus’ love,**

**who was so good as to die for love of our love.”**

**This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.**

All: **Amen.**

A reading from Sacred Scripture or the writings of St. Francis (see Appendix I. I and 2), with a reflection or meditation, follows.

The visit is carried out in the customary fashion. At the end of the visit, after shared prayer or General Intercessions, the visitor concludes with a prayer composed for the visit or with these or similar words:

**Blessed are you, Lord, the God of Israel!**

**You have visited your people and redeemed them.**

**Stir up your Spirit in us.**

**As we 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 you**

**and your people,**

**keep us faithful to the Rule**

**of the Secular Franciscan Order.**

**We ask this in Jesus’ name and for his sake.**

All. **Amen**.

The visitor may conclude with a scriptural exhortation. For example: (1 Thes 5:13-18, 23)

**We beg you:**

**Be at peace among yourselves.**

**This is what we ask you to do:**

**warn the idlers,**

**give courage to those who are apprehensive,**

**care for the weak,**

**and be patient with everyone.**

**Make sure that people do not try to take revenge;**

**you must all think of what is best for each other**

**and for the community.**

**Be happy at all times;**

**pray constantly;**

**and for all things give thanks to God,**

**because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.**

**May the God of peace make you perfect and holy;**

**and may you all be kept safe and blameless,**

**spirit, soul, and body,**

**for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The priests present may give their blessing, especially in the form of St. Francis’ blessing to Brother Leo:

**May the Lord bless you and keep you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you.**

All: **Amen.**

**May he look upon you with kindness and give you his peace.**

All: **Amen.**

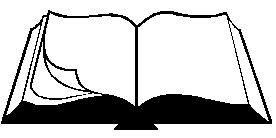
**May the Lord bless you,**

**+ the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.**

All: **Amen.**

**Appendix I**

**Lectionary**



**1. Scripture Readings**

Scripture Readings are taken from The Jerusalem Bible; psalms from the Grail Psalter.

**First Reading**

**Gal 6:14-18**

As for me, the only thing I can boast about is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world. It does not matter if a person is circumcised or not; what matters is for him to become an altogether new creature. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, who form the Israel of God.

I want no more trouble from anybody after this; the marks on my body are those of Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, my brothers. Amen.

**Eph 1:3-10**

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved, in whom, through his blood, we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of our sins. Such is the richness of the grace which he has showered on us in all wisdom and insight. He has let us know the mystery of his purpose, the hidden plan he so kindly made in Christ from the beginning to act upon when the times had run their course to the end: that he would bring everything together under Christ, as head, everything in the heavens and everything on earth.

**Phil 3:8-14**

Not only that, but I believe nothing can happen that will outweigh the loss of everything, and I look on everything as so much rubbish if only I can have Christ and be given a place in him. I am no longer trying for perfection by my own efforts, the perfection that comes from the Law, but I want only the perfection that comes through faith in Christ, and is from God and based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death. That is the way I can hope to take my place in the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have become perfect yet: I have not yet won, but I am still running, trying to capture the prize for which Christ Jesus captured me. I can assure you, my brothers; I am far from thinking that I have already won. All I can say is that I forget the past and I strain ahead for what is still to come; I am racing for the finish, for the prize to which God calls us upwards to receive in Christ Jesus.

**Col 3:9-17**

You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised or the uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free man. There is only Christ: he is everything, and he is in everything.

You are God’s chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now, you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

**I Pt 2:9-17**

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people at all, and now you are the People of God; once you were outside the mercy and now you have been given mercy.

I urge you, my dear people, while you are visitors and pilgrims, to keep yourselves free from the selfish passions that attack the soul. Always behave honourably among pagans so that they can see your good works for themselves and, when the day of reckoning comes, give thanks to God for the things which now make them denounce you as criminals.

For the sake of the Lord, accept the authority of every social institution: the emperor, as the supreme authority, and the governors as commissioned by him to punish criminals and praise good citizenship. God wants you to be good citizens, so as to silence what fools are saying in their ignorance. You are slaves of no one except God, so behave like free men, and never use your freedom as an excuse for wickedness. Have respect for everyone and love for our community; fear God and honour the emperor.

**Jas 2:12-18**

Talk and behave like people who are going to be judged by the law of freedom, because there will be judgement without mercy for those who have not been merciful themselves; but the merciful need have no fear of judgement.

Take the case, my brothers, of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to live on, and one of you says to them, “I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,” without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: “You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds—now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show.”

**I Cor 12:4-11**

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one, the power of miracles; another, prophecy; another the gift of recognizing spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability to interpret them. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses.

**Responsorial Psalms**

**Ps 15: 1-2a, 5, 7-8, 11**

Lord, who shall be admitted to your tent   
and dwell on your holy mountain?

**R.** O Lord, You are my inheritance.

He who acts with justice

and speaks the truth from his heart;

**R.**O Lord, You are my inheritance.

He who does no wrong to his brother,   
who casts no slur on his neighbour,

**R**. O Lord, You are my inheritance.

He who keeps his pledge, come what may:

**R.** O Lord, You are my inheritance.

**Ps 97:1-4**

The Lord is King, let earth rejoice,   
the many coastlands be glad.

**R.** Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,   
for he has made known his salvation.

Cloud and darkness are his raiment;   
his throne, justice and right.

**R.** Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,

for he has made known his salvation.

A fire prepares his path;

it burns up his foes on every side,

**R.** Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,

for he has made known his salvation.

His lightnings light up the world,   
the earth trembles at the sight.

**R.** Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp,

for he has made known his salvation.

**Ps 132**

O Lord, remember David

and all the many hardships he endured,

the oath he swore to the Lord,

his vow to the Strong One of Jacob.

**R.** Let us love one another, for love is from God.

I will not enter the house where I live

nor go to the bed where I rest.

I will give no sleep to my eyes,

to my eyelids, I will give no slumber

till I find a place for the Lord,

a dwelling for the Strong One of Jacob.

**R.** Let us love one another, for love is from God.

At Ephrathah we heard of the ark;

we found it in the plains of Yearim.

“Let us go to the place of his dwelling;

let us go to kneel at his footstool.”

**R.** Let us love one another, for love is from God.

Go up, Lord, to the place of your rest,

you and the ark of your strength.

Your priests shall be clothed with holiness:

your faithful shall ring out their joy.

For the sake of David, your servant   
do not reject your anointed.

**R.** Let us love one another, for love is from God.

**Ps 36:3-4, 5-6, 30-31**

There is no fear of God   
before his eyes.

**R.** The law of the Lord is in the heart of the just.

He so flatters himself in his mind   
that he knows not his guilt.

**R.** The law of the Lord is in the heart of the just.

See how the evil-doers fall!

Flung down, they shall never arise.

**R**. The law of the Lord is in the heart of the just.

**Ps 24:2-5, 8-10**

It is he who set it on the seas;

on the waters, he made it firm.

Who shall climb the mountain of the Lord?

Who shall stand in his Holy Place?

**R.** Make me walk in your truth, O Lord.

The man with clean hands and pure heart,

who desires not worthless things,

who has not sworn so as to deceive his neighbour.

**R.** Make me walk in your truth, O Lord.

**Ps 91:2-3, 6-7, 13-14**

“My refuge, my stronghold, my God, in whom I trust!”

**R.** How great are your works, O Lord!

He will conceal you with his pinions   
and under his wings, you will find refuge.

**R.** How great are your works, O Lord!

A thousand may fail at your side,   
ten thousand fall at your right,   
you, it will never approach;

**R.** How great are your works, O Lord!

**Verse Before the Gospel**

**Phil 1:21**

Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more. . . .

**Matt. 11:25**

At that time, Jesus exclaimed, “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children.”

**Col 3:14-15**

Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

**Matt. 10:7**

“And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.”

**Luke 10:1, 9**

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. “Cure those in it who are sick, and say, ‘The kingdom of God is very near to you.’”

**John 15:8**

“It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit, and then you will be my disciples.”

**Ps 132:1**

O Lord, remember David

and all the many hardships he endured.

**Gospels**

**Matt. 5:1-12**

Seeing the crowds, he went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

“How happy are the poor in spirit:

theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Happy the gentle:

they shall have the earth for their heritage.

Happy those who mourn:

they shall be comforted.

Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:

they shall be satisfied.

Happy the merciful:

they shall have mercy shown them.

Happy the pure in heart:

They shall see God.

Happy the peacemakers:

they shall be called sons of God.

Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:

theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.”

**Matt. 10:7-20**

“And as you go, proclaim the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You received without charge, give without charge. Provide yourselves with no gold or silver, not even with a few coppers for your purses, with no haversack for the journey or spare tunic or footwear or a staff, for the workman deserves his keep.

“Whatever town or village you go into, ask for someone trustworthy and stay with him until you leave. As you enter his house, salute it, and if the house deserves it, let your peace descend upon it; if it does not, let your peace come back to you. And if anyone does not welcome you or listen to what you have to say, as you walk out of the house or town, shake the dust from your feet. I tell you solemnly, on the day of Judgement it will not go as hard with the land of Sodom and Gomorrah as with that town. Remember, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; so be cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves.

“Beware of men: they will hand you over to sanhedrins and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the pagans. But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to speak or what to say; what you are to say will be given to you when the time comes; because it is not you who will be speaking; the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.”

**Matt. 11:20-30**

Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been worked because they refused to repent.

“Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. And still, I tell you that it will not go as hard on Judgement day with Tyre and Sidon as with you. And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be exalted as high as heaven? You shall be thrown down to hell. For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet. And still, I tell you that it will not go as hard with the land of Sodom on Judgement day as with you.”

At that time, Jesus exclaimed, “I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, just as no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”

**Matt. 12:46-50**

He was still speaking to the crowds when his mother and his brothers appeared; they were standing outside and were anxious to have a word with him. But to the man who told him this, Jesus replied, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. Anyone who does the will of my Father in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother.”

**Luke 6:27-35**

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly… Treat others as you would like them to treat you. If you love those who love you, what thanks can you expect? Even sinners love those who love them… Instead, love your enemies and do good, and lend without any hope of return. You will have a great reward, and you will be sons (and daughters) of the Most High, for He himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

**Luke 10:1-9**

After this, the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out ahead of him, in pairs, to all the towns and places he himself was to visit. He said to them, “The harvest is rich, but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.

Start off now, but remember, I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, no haversack, no sandals. Salute no one on the road. Whatever house you go into, let your first words be, ‘Peace to this house!’ And if a man of peace lives there, your peace will go and rest on him; if not, it will come back to you.

Stay in the same house, taking what food and drink they have to offer, for the labourer deserves his wages; do not move from house to house. Whenever you go into a town where they make you welcome, eat what is set before you. Cure those in it who are sick, and say, ‘The kingdom of God is very near to you.

**John 15:1-8**

“I am the true vine,

and my Father is the vinedresser.

Every branch in me that bears no fruit

he cuts away,

and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes

to make it bear even more.

You are pruned already,

by means of the word that I have spoken to you.

Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.

As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,

but must remain part of the vine,

neither can you unless you remain in me.

I am the vine,

you are the branches.

Whoever remains in me, with me in him,

bears fruit in plenty;

for cut off from me you can do nothing.

Anyone who does not remain in me

is like a branch that has been thrown away, he withers;

these branches are collected and thrown on the fire,

and they are burnt.

If you remain in me

and my words remain in you,

you may ask what you will

and you shall get it.

It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit,

and then you will be my disciples.”

**1 John 17:20-26**

“I pray not only for these,

but for those also

who through their words, will believe in me.

May they all be one.

Father, may they be one in us,

as you are in me and I am in you,

so that the world may believe it was you who sent me.

I have given them the glory you gave to me,

that they may be one as we are one.

With me in them and you in me,

may they be so completely one

that the world will realise that it was you who sent me

and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.

Father,

I want those you have given me

to be with me where I am,

so that they may always see the glory

you have given me

because you loved me

before the foundation of the world.

Father, Righteous One,

the world has not known you,

but I have known you,

and these have known

that you have sent me.

I have made your name known to them

and will continue to make it known,

so that the love with which you loved me may be in them,

and so that I may be in them.”

**John 13:4**

They were at supper,

and the devil had already put it into the mind of Judas Iscariot son of Simon, to betray him.

Jesus knew that the Father had put everything into his hands,

And that he had come from God and was returning to God,

And he got up from table, removed his outer garment and,

taking a towel, wrapped it round his waist;

he then poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet

and to wipe them with the towel he was wearing.

He came to Simon Peter, who said to him,

“Lord, are you going to wash my feet?”

Jesus answered, “At the moment you do not know what I am doing,

but later you will understand.”

“Never!” said Peter “You shall never wash my feet.”

Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you can have nothing in common with me.”

“Then Lord,” said Simon Peter, “not only my feet but my hands and my head as well!”

Jesus said, “No one who has taken a bath needs washing, he is clean

All over. You are clean, though not all of you are.”

He knew who was going to betray him,

that is why he said, “though not all of you are.”

When he had washed their feet

and put on his clothes again,

he went back to the table.

“Do you understand,” he said “what I have done to you?

You call me Master and Lord,

and rightly; so I am.

If I, then, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet,

you should wash each other’s feet.

I have given you and example

so that you may copy what I have done to you.

**John 13:34-35**

I give you a new commandment:

Love one another.

Just as I have loved you,

you also must love one another.

By this love you have for one another,

Everyone will know that you are my disciples.

**2. Franciscan Readings**

*At fraternity gatherings, especially at the ordinary meeting of the fraternity and at the celebration of a chapter of elections, it is a good idea to have on hand the writings of St. Francis or other writings taken from the early Franciscan sources, in order to provide topics and ideas for the members to reflect on. Some of the suggested writings are the following:*

**I Letter to All the Faithful**

*(Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance)*

**1-7**

“All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength (cf. Mark 12:30) and love their neighbours as themselves (cf. Matt. 22:39) and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and produce worthy fruits of penance:

Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them (cf. Is 11:2) and He will make His home and dwelling among them (cf. John 14:23). They are children of the heavenly Father (cf. Matt. 5:45) whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 12:50).

**7-10**

They are children of the heavenly Father (cf. Matt. 5:45) whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 12:50).

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 12:50). (We are) mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and (when) we give birth to Him through (His) holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example (cf. Matt. 5:16).

**8-19**

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to our Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father Who is in heaven (Matt. 12:50). (We are) mothers, when we carry Him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and (when) we give birth to Him through (His) holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example (cf. Matt. 5:16).

Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful, and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse! Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave up His life for His sheep (cf. John 10:15) and who prayed to the Father saying:

O Holy Father, protect those in your name (John 17:11) whom you have given to me in the world; they were yours, and you have given them to me (John 17:6). And the words which you gave to me, I have given to them, and they have accepted them and have believed truly that I have come from you and they have known that you sent me (John 17:8). I pray for them and not for the world (cf. John 17:9). Bless and sanctify (them) (John 17:17), and I sanctify myself for them (John 17:19). Not only for these do I pray, but for those who through their words will believe in me (John 17:20), so that they may be made holy in being one (John 17:23) as we are one (John 17:11). And I wish, Father, that where I am they also may be with me so that they may see my glory (in 17:24) in your kingdom (Matt. 20:21). Amen.

**11-19**

Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful, and wondrous it is to have such a Spouse! Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, Who gave up His life for His sheep (cf. John 10:15) and who prayed to the Father saying:

O Holy Father, protect those in your name (John 17:11) whom you have given to me in the world; they were yours, and you have given them to me (in 17:6). And the words which you gave to me, I have given to them, and they have accepted them and have believed truly that I have come from you and they have known that you sent me (in 17:8). I pray for them and not for the world (cf. John 17:9). Bless and sanctify (them) (in 17:17), and I sanctify myself for them (John 17:19). Not only for these do I pray, but for those who through their words will believe in me (John 17:20), so that they may be made holy in being one (in 17:23) as we are one (John 17:11). And I wish, Father, that where I am they also may be with me so that they may see my glory (John 17:24) in your kingdom (Matt. 20:21). Amen.

**II Letter to All the Faithful**

**11-15, 19-21**

And the will of the Father was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and (Who) was born for us, should, through His own blood, offer Himself as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself through Whom all things were made (cf. John 1:3), but for our sins, leaving us an example that we should follow in His footprints (cf. 1 Pt 2:21). And (the Father) wills that all of us should be saved through Him and that we receive Him with our pure heart and chaste body. But there are few who wish to receive Him and be saved by Him, although His yoke is sweet and His burden light (cf. Matt. 11:30).

Let us love God, therefore, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind because He Who seeks this above all else has said: The true worshipers will adore the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). For all those who worship Him are to worship Him in the spirit of truth (cf. in 4:24). And let us praise Him and pray to Him day and night (Ps 31:4), saying: Our Father Who art in heaven (Matt. 6:9), since we should always pray and never lose heart (Luke 18:1).

**48-60**

And upon all men and women, if they have done these things and have persevered to the end, the Spirit of the Lord will rest (Is 11:2), and He will make His home and dwelling among them (cf. John 14:23). They will be children of the heavenly Father (cf. Matt. 5:45) whose works they do. And they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Matt. 12:50). We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined to Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. We are brothers when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven (cf. Matt. 12:50). (We are) mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor. 6:20) through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to Him through (His) holy manner of working, which should shine before others as an example (cf. Matt. 5:16).

Oh, how glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! Oh, how holy, consoling, beautiful, and wondrous it is to have a Spouse! Oh, how holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all things to have such a Brother and Son, Who laid down His life for His sheep (cf. John 10:15) and (Who) prayed to the Father for us saying: Holy Father, protect those in your name whom you have given to me (John 17:11). Father, all those whom you gave me in the world were yours, and you have given them to me (John 17:6). And the words which you gave to me I have given to them; and they have accepted them and truly know that I came from you and they for the world (cf. John 17:9); bless and sanctify them (John 17:17), and I sanctify myself for their sakes so that they may be holy (John 17:19) in being one as we are (John 17:11). And I wish, Father, that where I am they also may be with me so that they may see my glory (John 17:24) in your kingdom (Matt. 20:21).

**61-62**

Let every creature

in heaven, on earth,

in the sea and in the depths,

give praise,

glory, honour, and blessing

to Him

Who suffered so much for us,

Who has given so many good things,

and (Who) will (continue to) do so for the future.

For He is our power and strength,

He Who alone is good,

(Who) is most high,

(Who is) all-powerful, admirable, (and) glorious;

(Who) alone is holy, praiseworthy,

and blessed throughout endless ages.

Amen

**The Unconfirmed Rule of 1221**

**17:17-18**

And let us refer all good

to the most high and supreme Lord God,

and acknowledge that every good is His,

and thank Him for everything,

(He) from Whom all good things come.

And may He,

the Highest and Supreme,   
Who alone is true God,

have and be given and receive   
every honour and reverence,   
every praise and blessing,   
every thanks and glory,   
for every good is His,

He Who alone is good.

**21:2-9**

Fear and honour, praise and bless, give thanks and adore

the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and in Unity,

the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

the Creator of all.

Do penance, performing worthy fruits of penance

since we will soon die.

Give, and it shall be given to you.

Forgive, and you shall be forgiven.

And if you do not forgive men their sins,

the Lord will not forgive you your sins.

Confess all your sins.

Blessed are those who die in penance,

for they shall be in the Kingdom of heaven.

Woe to those who do not die in penance,

for they shall be the children of the devil

whose works they do,

and they shall go into the eternal fire.

Beware and abstain from every evil

and persevere in good till the end.

**22:25-26**

Therefore, all (my) brothers, let us be very much on our guard so that we do not lose or turn away our mind and heart from the Lord under the guise of (achieving) some reward or (doing) some work or (providing) some help. But in the holy love which is God (cf. 1 John 4:16), I beg all (my) brothers, both the Ministers and the others, as they overcome every obstacle and put aside every care and anxiety, to strive as best they can to serve, love, honour, and adore the Lord God with a clean heart and a pure mind, for this is what He desires above all things.

**22:27-31**

And let us make a home and dwelling place (cf. John 14:23) for Him Who is the Lord God Almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, Who says: Watch, therefore, praying constantly that you may be considered worthy to escape all the evils that are to come and to stand secure before the Son of Man (Luke 21:36). And when you stand to pray (Mark 11:25) say (Luke 11:2): Our Father Who art in heaven (Matt. 6:9). And let us adore him with a pure heart because we should always pray and not lose heart (Luke 18:1); for the Father seeks such worshipers. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23-24).

**22:41-42**

Let us, therefore, hold onto the words, the life, and the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Him Who humbled Himself to ask His Father for us and to make His name known to us, saying: Father, glorify Your name (John 12:28) and glorify Your Son so that Your Son may glorify You (John 17: 1). Father, I have made Your name known to the men whom You Have given to Me (John 17:6). The words which You have given to Me I have given to them; and they have accepted them and know truly that I came from You, and have believed that You sent me (John 17:8).

**23:1-5**

All-powerful, most holy, most high and supreme God,

Holy and just Father,

Lord, King of heaven and earth,

we thank You for Yourself,

for through Your holy will

and through Your only Son

with the Holy Spirit,

You have created all things spiritual and corporal

and, having made us in Your own image and likeness,

You placed us in paradise.

And through our own fault, we have fallen.

And we thank You,

for as through Your Son You created us,

so also, through Your holy love, with which You loved us,

You brought about His birth

as true God and true man

by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary,

and You willed to redeem us captives

through His cross and blood and death.

And we thank You

for Your Son, Himself will come again

in the glory of His Majesty

to send the wicked ones

who have not done penance and who have not known You

into the eternal fire,

and to say to all those who have known You

and have adored You

and have served You in penance:

“Come, you blessed of my Father,

receive the kingdom,

which has been prepared for you

from the beginning of the world.”

And because all of us

wretches and sinners

are not worthy to pronounce Your name,

we humbly ask that

our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your beloved Son

in whom You were well pleased,

together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete,

give You thanks

as it please You and Him

for everything,

(He) Who always satisfies You in everything,

through Whom You have done such great things for us.

Alleluia!

**23:7**

And all of us lesser brothers, useless servants (Luke 17:10), humbly ask and beg all those who wish to serve the Lord God within the holy, catholic, and apostolic church, and all the following orders: priests, deacons, subdeacons, acolytes, exorcists, lectors, porters, and all clerics, all religious men and all religious women, all lay brothers and youths, the poor and the needy, kings and princes, workers and farmers, servants and masters, all virgins and continent and married women, all lay people, men and women, all children, adolescents, the young and the old, the healthy and the sick, all the small and the great, all peoples, races, tribes, and tongues, all nations and all peoples everywhere on earth who are and who will be—that all of us may persevere in the true faith and in penance, for otherwise no one will be saved.

**23:8**

Let us all love the Lord God with all (our) heart, all (our) soul, with all (our) mind and all (our) strength (cf. Mark 12:30) and with fortitude and with total understanding (Matt. 12:33), with all of our powers (cf. Luke 10:27), with every effort, every affection, every emotion, every desire, and every wish (Matt. 12:30). He has given and gives to each one of us (our) whole body, (our) whole soul, and (our) whole life. He created us and redeemed us, and will save us by His mercy alone (cf. Tob. 13:5). He did and does every good thing for us (who are) miserable and wretched, rotten and foul-smelling, ungrateful and evil.

**23:9-11**

Therefore,

let us desire nothing else,

let us wish for nothing else,

let nothing else please us

and cause us delight,

except our Creator and Redeemer and Saviour,

the one true God,

Who is the Fullness of Good,

all good, every good, the true and supreme good,

Who alone is Good,

merciful and gentle,

delectable and sweet,

Who alone is holy,

just and true,

holy and right,

Who alone is kind, innocent, pure,

from Whom and through Whom and in Whom is

all pardon,

all grace,

all glory,

of all the penitent and the just,

of all the blessed who rejoice together in heaven.

Therefore,

let nothing hinder us,

nothing separate us,

or nothing come between us.

Let all of us,

wherever we are,

in every place,

at every hour,

at every time of day,

every day and continually,

believe truly and humbly

and keep (our) heart

and love, honour, adore, serve,

praise and bless,

glorify and exalt,

magnify and give thanks

to the most high and supreme eternal God,

Trinity and Unity,

the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

Creator of all,

Saviour of all who believe in Him

and hope in Him   
and love Him,

Who is

without beginning and without end,

unchangeable, invisible,   
indescribable, ineffable,

incomprehensible, unfathomable,

blessed, worthy of praise,

glorious, exalted on high, sublime,   
most high, gentle, lovable,

delectable and totally desirable above all else

forever.

Amen.

**The Testament**

**1-14**

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them, and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would simply pray and speak in this way: “We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world.”

Afterward, the Lord gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the manner of the Holy Roman Church because of their order, that if they were to persecute me, I would (still) have recourse to them. And if I possessed as much wisdom as Solomon had and I came upon pitiful priests of this world, I would not preach contrary to their will in the parishes in which they live. And I desire to fear, love and honour them and all others as my masters.

And I do not wish to consider sin in them because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my masters. And I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except His Most Holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others. And these most holy mysteries I wish to have honoured above all things and to be reverenced and to have them reserved in precious places. Wherever I come upon His most holy written words in unbecoming places, I desire to gather them up, and I ask that they be collected and placed in a suitable place. And we should honour and respect all theologians and those who Minister the most holy divine words as those who Minister spirit and life to us (cf. John 6:64).

And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel.

**The Siena Testament**

. . Write that I bless all my brothers, (those) who are in the Order, and (those) who will come until the end of the world . . . Since because of my weakness and the pain of my sickness I am not strong enough to speak, I make known my will to my brothers briefly in these three phrases, namely: as a sign that they remember my blessing and my testament, let them always love one another, let them always love and be faithful to our Lady Holy Poverty, and let them always be faithful and subject to the prelates and all clerics of Holy Mother Church.

**The Admonitions**

**4.** *I did not come to be served, but to serve, says the Lord.* Let those who are placed over others boast about that position as much as they would if they were assigned the duty of washing the feet of their brothers (and sisters). And if they are more upset at having their place over others taken away from them than losing their position at their feet, the more they store up *a money bag* to the peril of their soul.

**Esp. I: 13-18**

All others who do not share in this same Spirit and who presume to receive Him eat and drink judgment to themselves (cf. 1 Cor. 11:29).

Therefore, O sons of men, how long will you be hard of heart? (Ps 4:3). Why do you not recognise the truth and believe in the Son of God? (cf. John 9:35). See, daily He humbles Himself (cf. Phil 2:8) as when He came from the royal throne (Wis. 18:15) into the womb of the Virgin; daily He comes to us in a humble form; daily He comes down from the bosom of the Father (cf. John 1:18) upon the altar in the hands of the priest.

**THE SALUTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Hail, O Lady,

Holy Queen,

Mary, holy Mother of God:

you are the virgin made church

and the one chosen by the most holy Father in heaven,

whom He consecrated

with His most holy beloved Son

and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,

in whom there was and is

all the fullness of grace and every good.

Hail, His Palace!

Hail, His Tabernacle!

Hail, His Home!

Hail, His Robe!

Hail, His Servant!

Hail, His Mother!

And, (hail) all you holy virtues

which through the grace and light of the Holy Spirit

are poured into the hearts of the faithful

so that from their faithless state

you may make them faithful to God.

**THE SALUTATION OF THE VIRTUES**

Hail, Queen Wisdom, may the Lord protect you

with your sister, holy pure Simplicity.

Lady, holy Poverty, may the Lord protect you

with your sister, holy Humility.

Lady, holy Charity, may the Lord protect you

with your sister, holy Obedience.

O most holy Virtues, may the Lord protect all of you,

from Whom you come and proceed.

There is surely no one in the entire world

who can possess any one of you

unless he dies first.

Whoever possesses one (of you)

and does not offend the others,

possesses all.

And whoever offends one (of you)

does not possess any

and offends all.

And each one destroys vices and sins.

Holy Wisdom destroys

Satan and all his subtlety.

Pure, holy Simplicity destroys

all the wisdom of this world

and the wisdom of the body.

Holy Poverty destroys

the desire of riches

and avarice

and the cares of this world.

Holy Humility destroys pride

and all the people who are in the world

and all things that belong to the world.

Holy Charity destroys

every temptation of the devil and of the flesh

and every carnal fear.

Holy Obedience destroys

every wish of the body and of the flesh,

and binds its mortified body

to obedience of the Spirit

and to obedience of one’s brother,

and (the person who possesses her) is subject and submissive

to all persons in the world,

and not to man only

but even to all beasts and wild animals,

so that they may do whatever they want with him,

inasmuch as it has been given to them from above by the Lord.

**TRUE AND PERFECT JOY** (see also 2 Cel. 125 and 145)

*This is a different type of writing since it is transmitted through the medium of a story and through a much later witness, a 14th-century manuscript discovered and published by Bughetti in the* Archivum Franciscanum Historicum *20 (1927): 107. Father Esser published this version in his collection and supported it with parallel texts found in* Admonition V *and the* Second Life of Thomas of Celano*, 125 and 145. This description of perfect joy graphically portrays St. Francis’ understanding of true minority and expresses the Franciscan ideal through the medium of the human person.*

(Brother Leonard) related, in the same place (the Portiuncula), that one day at Saint Mary the blessed Saint Francis called Brother Leo and said: “Brother Leo, write!”

He answered: “I’m ready.”

“Write,” (Francis) said, “what true joy is:

“A messenger comes and says that all the masters in Paris have come into the Order; write: This is not true joy.

Or that all the prelates beyond the mountains (have entered the Order); write: This is not true joy.

Again, that my brothers have gone to the nonbelievers and converted all of them to the faith.

Again, that I have so much grace from God that I heal the sick and perform many miracles: I tell you that true joy does not consist in any of these things.”

(Brother Leo asked) “What then is true joy?”

(Francis replied) “I return from Perugia and arrive here in the dead of night; and it is wintertime, muddy and so cold that icicles have formed on the edges of my habit and keep striking my legs, and blood flows from such wounds, and all covered with mud and cold, I come to the gate, and after I have knocked and called for some time, a brother comes and asks:

‘Who are you?’

I answer: ‘Brother Francis.’

And he says: ‘Go away; this is not a proper hour for going about; you may not come in.’

And when I insist, he answers: ‘Go away, you are a simple and a stupid person; we are so many, and we have no need of you. You are certainly not coming to us at this hour!’

And I stand again at the door and say: ‘For the love of God, take me in tonight!’

I tell you this: If I had patience and did not become upset, there would be true joy in this and true virtue and the salvation of the soul.”

**3. Prayers of St. Francis**

**THE CANTICLE OF BROTHER SUN**

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,

Yours are the praises, the glory, the honour, and all blessing.

To You alone, Most High, do they belong,

and no man is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures,

especially Sir Brother Sun,

Who is the day and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,

and bears a likeness of You, Most High One.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,

in heaven, You formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,

and through the air, cloudy and serene,

and every kind of weather

through which You give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,

which is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,

through whom You light the night,

and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,

who sustains and governs us,

and who produces varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praised be You, my Lord,

through those who give pardon for Your love

and bear infirmity and tribulation.

Blessed are those who endure in peace,

for by You, Most High, they shall be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,

from whom no living man can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin.

Blessed are those whom death will find in Your most holy will,

for the second death shall do them no harm.

Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks

and serve Him with great humility.

**THE EXHORTATION TO THE PRAISE OF GOD**

Fear the Lord and give Him honour (Rv 14:7).

The Lord is worthy to receive praise and honour (Rs 4:11).

All you who fear the Lord, praise Him (cf. Ps 21:24).

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you (Luke 1:28).

Heaven and earth, praise Him (cf. Ps 68:35).

All you rivers, praise Him (cf. Dn 3:78).

All you children of God, bless the Lord (cf. Dn 3:78).

This is the day which the Lord has made,

let us exalt and rejoice in it! (Ps 117:24).

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! O King of Israel (John 12:13).

Let every spirit praise the Lord (Ps 150:6).

Praise the Lord for He is good (Ps 146:1);

all you who read this, bless the Lord (Ps 102:21).

All you creatures bless the Lord (cf. Ps 102:22).

All you birds of the heavens, praise the Lord (cf. Dn 3:80; Ps 148:10).

All you children, praise the Lord (cf. Ps 112:1).

Young men and virgins, praise the Lord (cf. Ps 148:12).

The Lamb Who was slain is worthy

to receive praise, glory, and honour (cf. Rv 5:12).

Blessed be the Holy Trinity and undivided Unity.

Saint Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

**OFFICE OF THE PASSION**

**[Part One: For the Sacred Triduum of Holy Week and for Weekdays throughout the Year]**

*The collage of psalm verses which Francis put together to make up the Hours of this first part form not only the prayer of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil; they, more importantly, shape the prayer for the greater part of the year, i.e., those periods outside the season of Advent, Christmas and Easter, as well as outside of Sunday and principal feasts. The opening directive of the Office of the Passion indicates the reason for its beginning with Compline of Holy Thursday: “For on that night, our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed and taken captive.” Thus the verses chosen by Francis for this hour reflect the prayers of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani.*

***At Compline***

*O God, come to our aid.*

*O Lord, Make haste to help us.*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***Antiphon:***

**1 Holy Virgin Mary,**

**among the women born into the world,**

**there is no one like you.**

**2 Daughter and the servant**

**of the most high and supreme King**

**and of the Father in heaven,**

**Mother of our most holy Lord Jesus Christ,**

**Spouse of the Holy Spirit.**

**3 Pray for us**

**with Saint Michael the Archangel,   
all the powers of the heavens   
and all the saints,**

**at the side of your most holy beloved Son,**

**the Lord and Teacher.**

**Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Psalm (I)

1 *God, I have told you of my life;*

*you have placed all my tears in your sight.* (Ps 56:8b-9).

2*All my enemies were plotting evil against me;* (Ps 41:8),

*they took counsel together.* (cf. Ps 71:10).

3  *They repaid me evil for good*

*and hatred for my love.* (cf. Ps 109:5).

4 *They slandered me in return for my love,*

*but I continued to pray.* (Ps 109:4).

5 *My holy Father,* (John 17:11; Matt. 11:25),

*King of heaven and earth,*

*do not leave me for trouble is near*

*and there is no one to help* (Ps 22:12).

6 *Let my enemies be turned back*

*on whatever day I shall call upon You;*

*for now, I know that You are my God* (Ps 56:10).

7 *My friends and my neighbours have drawn near*

*and have stood against me;*

*and those who were close to me have stayed far away.* (Ps 38:12).

8 *You have driven my acquaintances far from me;*

*they have made me an abomination to them.*

*I have been handed over, and I did not escape. (*Ps 88:9).

9 *Holy Father,* (John 17:11; Ps 22:20), *do not remove your help from me my God, look to my aid.* (cf. Ps 71:12).

10 *Come to my help,*

*Lord, God of my salvation* (Ps 38:23).

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Repeat Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary,…

This Office has a Marian context. Francis turns to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Antiphon, at the beginning and end of each hour, in all 14 times and asks her to pray for us. This antiphon “Holy Virgin Mary” is recited at all the hours and is said in place of the antiphon, chapter, hymn, versicle and oration — both at Matins and likewise at all the hours. St. Francis did not say anything else in these hours except this antiphon with its psalms. At the conclusion of the office, St. Francis used to say:

Let us bless the Lord God, *living and true!* (1 Thes 1:9)  
Let us always render Him

praise, *glory, honour, blessing*, and every good. (Rev 4:9)

Amen. Amen. *So be it. So be it.* (Ps 41:14)

The psalm verses chosen for Matins, which follows, cannot be related easily to a single scene of the Passion, but suggest the time of his imprisonment after his capture in the Garden of Gethsemane. While verses 4 and 5 suggest Christ’s uninterrupted self-emptying in obedience to His Father, the introductory verses 1, 2, and 3 form a prayer for deliverance. It is verses 6 through to 10 that conjure up images of Jesus’ capture, imprisonment, and trial. The final verse, 11 and 12, show his utter confidence in a loving Father.

***At Matins***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (II)

1 *Lord, God of my salvation,*

*I cry to You by day and by night* (Ps 87:12).

2 *Let my prayer enter into Your sight;   
incline Your ear to my prayer* (Ps 87:3).

3 *Attend to my soul and free it;*

*ransom me from my enemies* (Ps 68:19).

4 *Since it is You Who drew me out of the womb,*

*You, my hope from my mother’s breasts,*

*I am cast upon You from the womb.* (Ps 21:10).

5 *From the womb of my mother You are my God;   
do not depart from me* (Ps 21:11).

6 *You know my disgrace, and my confusion,   
and my shame* (Ps 68:20).

7 *All those who trouble me are in Your sight*

*and my heart has expected abuse and misery* (Ps 68:21a-b).

8 *And I looked for someone who would grieve together with me*

*and there was none,*

*for someone to console me, and I found none* (Ps 68:21c-d).

9 *O God, the wicked have risen against me,*

*and they have sought my life in the assembly of the powerful,*

*and they have not placed You in their sight* (Ps 85:14).

10 *I am numbered among those who go down into the pit;*

*I have become as someone without help, cut off among the dead.* (Ps 87:5-6a).

11 You are my most Holy Father,   
*my King and my God* (cf. Ps 43:5a).

12 *Come to my aid,*

*Lord, God of my salvation* (Ps 37:23).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The people of the Middle Ages held that the setting of Prime was the hour when Christ was brought before Pilate. While the first eight psalm verses form a prayer for strength the final four express one of praise. Thus Prime becomes for Francis the hour recalling both Christ’s appearance before Pilate and his resurrection.

***At Prime***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (III)

1 *Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me   
since my soul places its trust in You.* (Ps 56:2a).

2 *And I will hope under the shadow of Your wings*

*until wickedness passes by.* (Ps 56:2b).

3 *I will cry to my Most High God, my most holy Father,*

*Who has done good to me.* (cf. Ps 56:3).

4 *He has sent from heaven and delivered me.*

*He has disgraced those who have trampled upon me.* (Ps 56:4a-b).

5 *God has sent His mercy and His truth.*

*He has snatched my life* (Ps 56:4c-5a)

*from the strongest of my enemies*

*and from those who hated me*

*since they were too strong for me.* (Ps 17:18).

6 *They have prepared a trap for my feet   
and have bowed down my soul.* (Ps 56:7a-b).

7 *They have dug a pit before my face   
and fell into it themselves!* (Ps 56:7c-d).

8 *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready;   
I will sing and recite a psalm*. (Ps 56:8).

9 *Arise, my glory, arise psalter and harp,   
I will arise at dawn.* (Ps 56:9).

10 *I will praise You among the peoples, O Lord,*

*I will chant a psalm to You among the nations.* (Ps 56:10).

11 S*ince Your Mercy is exalted even to the skies,   
and Your truth even to the clouds.* (Ps 56:11).

12 *Be exalted above the heavens, O God,*

*and may Your glory be over all the earth!* (Ps 56:12).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The verses chosen for Terce, which follows, form the prayers of Jesus at the hour of the scourging, the crowning with thorns and the mockery and abuse of the Crowd.

***At Terce***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (IV)

1 *Have mercy on me, O God, for people have trampled me underfoot;*

*all the day long they have afflicted me*

*and fight against me.* (Ps 55:2).

2 *My enemies trample upon me all the day long*

*since those who wage war against me are many.* (Ps 55:3).

3 *All my enemies have been thinking evil things against me*

*they set an evil plan against me.* (Ps 40:8b-9a).

4 *Those who guarded my life*

*have conspired together.* (Ps 70: I Ob).

5 *They went forth*

*and spread it everywhere.* (Ps 40:7).

6 *All those who see me laugh at me,   
they whispered and shook their heads.* (Ps 21:8).

7 *I am a worm and no man,*

*the scorn of men and the outcast of the people.* (Ps 21:7).

8 *I have been made despicable to my neighbours*

*exceeding all of my enemies*

*and a fear for my acquaintances.* (Ps 30:12a-b).

9 *O holy Father, (John 17:11), do not keep your help from me*

*but look to my defence.* (Ps 21:20).

10 *Come to my help,*

*Lord, God of my salvation.* (Ps 37:23).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Sext which follows was seen as the hour of the Crucifixion, noon, in which Christ was totally abandoned and “zeal for the Father’s house” had completely consumed him.

***At Sext***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (V)

1 *I cried to the Lord with all my voice,*

*with all my voice, I made supplication to the Lord.* (Ps 141:2).

2 *I pour out my prayer in His sight*

*and I speak of my trouble before Him.* (Ps 141:3).

3 *When my spirit failed me*

*you knew my ways.* (Ps 141:4a-b).

4 *On the path on which I walked,*

*the proud have hidden a trap for me.* (Ps 141:4c-d).

5 *I looked to my right, and I saw:*

*and there was no one who knew me.* (Ps 141:5a-b).

6 *I have no means of escape:*

*and there is no one who cares for my life.* (Ps 141:5c-d).

7 *Because of You, I have sustained abuse   
while confusion covers my face.* (Ps 68:8).

8 *I have been made an outcast to my brothers*

*and a stranger to the children of my mother.* (Ps 68:9).

9 *Holy Father* (John 17:11), *zeal for your house has consumed me;*

*and the abuses of those who have attacked You*

*have fallen upon me.* (Ps 68:10).

10 *And against me, they have rejoiced and have united together,*

*and many scourges were heaped upon me, and I knew not why.* (Ps 34:15).

11 *More numerous than the hairs of my head   
are those who hate me without cause.* (Ps 68:5a-b).

12 *Those who persecute me unjustly, have been strengthened;*

*must I then restore what I did not steal?* (Ps 68:5c-d).

13 *The wicked witnesses who rise up*

*have interrogated me about things of which I am ignorant.*

(Ps 34:11).

14 *They repaid me evil for good (Ps 34:12a), and they harassed me because I pursued good.* (Ps 37:21).

15 *You are my most holy Father,   
my King, and my God.* (Ps 43:5).

16 *Come to my help,*

*Lord, God of my salvation.* (Ps 37:23).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The verses of None the hour of Christ’s death on the cross, express in the words of the psalmist, and Christ’s attitudes. While they express the depth of depression, the last six verses also express the hope of the resurrection.

**At None**

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (VI)

1 *O all of you who pass along the way,*

*look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow.* (Lam 1:12a-b).

2 *For many dogs have surrounded me;*

*a pack of evildoers has closed in on me.* (Ps 21:17).

3 *They have looked and stared upon me;*

*they have divided my garments among them,*

*and for my tunic, they have cast lots.* (Ps 21:18b-19).

4 *They have pierced my hands and my feet;   
they have numbered all my bones*. (Ps 21:17c-18a).

5 *They have opened their mouth against me   
like a lion raging and roaring*. (Ps 21:14).

6 *I am poured out like water*

*and all of my bones have been scattered.* (Ps 21:15a-b).

7 *And my heart has become like melting wax   
in the midst of my bosom.* (Ps 21:15c).

8 *My strength is dried up like baked clay   
and my tongue clings to my jaws*. (Ps 21:16a-b).

9 *And they have given gall as my food*

*and in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.* (Ps 68:22).

10 *And they have led me into the dust of death* (cf. Ps 21:16c)

and *they have added grief to my wounds.* (Ps 68:27b).

11 *I have slept and have risen* (Ps 3:6)

*and my most holy Father has received me with glory*. (cf. Ps 72:24c).

12 *Holy Father* (John 17:11), *You have held my right hand*

*and You have led me with Your counsel.* (Ps 72:24).

13 *For what is there in heaven for me,*

*and, besides you, what do I want on earth?* (Ps 72:25).

14 *See, see that I am God, says the Lord.*

*I shall be exalted among the nations*

*and I shall be exalted on the earth* (Ps 45:11).

15 *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel* (Luke 1:68a).

*Who has redeemed the souls of His servants*

*with His very own most holy Blood*

*and Who will not abandon all who hope in Him.* (Ps 33:23).

16 *And we know for He comes,*

*for He will come to judge justice.* (cf. Ps 95:13b).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

These verses of express the victory of the risen Lord, whose resurrection was traditionally celebrated during Vespers. They contain sentiments of wonder and an eagerness to share the good news of salvation with all creation.

***At Vespers***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

Psalm (VII)

1 *All you nations clap your hands;*

*shout to God with a voice of gladness.* (Ps 46:2).

2 *For the Lord, the Most High,*

*the Awesome is the Great King over all the earth.* (Ps 46:3).

3 For the Most Holy Father of heaven*, our King before all ages,*

*has sent His Beloved Son* from on high

and has brought salvation in the midst of the earth. (Ps 73:12).

4 *Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice,*

*let the sea and all that is in it be moved,*

*let the fields and all that is in them be joyful.* (Ps 95:11-12a).

5 *Sing a new song* to Him*,*

*sing to the Lord, all the earth!* (cf. Ps 95:1).

6 *For the Lord is great and highly to be praised,   
and awesome is He beyond all gods.* (Ps 95:4).

7 *Give to the Lord, (you) families of nations,*

*give to the Lord glory and honour,*

*give to the Lord the glory due His name. (*Ps 95:7-8a).

8 Offer up your bodies and *take up* His holy cross,

*and follow* His most holy commands even to the end*.*

(cf. Luke 14:27;1 Pt 2:21).

9 *Let the whole earth tremble before His face;*

*say among the nations that the Lord has ruled from a tree.*

(Ps 95:9b-10a).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Office is recited daily to this point from Good Friday to the Feast of the Ascension till this point. On the Feast of the Ascension, however, these versicles are added:

10 And he ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of the most holy Father in heaven;

*O God, be exalted above the heavens*

*and above all, the earth be Your glory.* (Ps 56:12).

11 And we know that *He has come*,   
*that He will come to judge* justice.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

**[Part Two: The Easter Season]**

On Holy Saturday, namely at the end of Saturday: This psalm is also said daily at Compline up to the Octave of Pentecost.

***At Compline***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (VIII)*

1 *God, come to my assistance,   
Lord, make haste to help me. (Ps 70:2ff)*

2 *Let them be put to shame and confounded   
who seek my life.*

3 *Let them be put to flight and disgraced   
who rejoice at my misfortune*.

4 *Let them be turned back in shame   
who say to me: Aha! Aha!*

5 *May all those who seek You exult and be glad in You,*

*and may those who live Your salvation ever say:*

*“May God be glorified!”*

6 *But I am afflicted and poor:   
help me, O God.*

7 *You are my help and my deliverer.   
Lord, do not delay (Ps 69:2-6).*

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At Matins of Easter Sunday***Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary*Psalm (IX)*

1 *Sing to the Lord a new song*

*for He has done wondrous deeds.* (Ps 97: la-b).

2 His *right hand and His holy arm*

have sacrificed His beloved Son. (Ps 97:1c-d).

3 *The Lord has made His salvation known;*

*in the sight of the nations, He has revealed His justice.* (Ps 97:2).

4 *On that day, the Lord sent His mercy   
and His song at night.* (cf. Ps 41:9a-b).

5 *This is the day the Lord has made;   
let us rejoice and be glad in it.* (Ps 117:24).

6 *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord;*

*the Lord is God, and He has given us light.* (Ps I17:26a, 27a).

7 *Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice,*

*let the sea and all that is in it be moved;*

*let the fields be joyful and all that is in them.* (Ps 95:1 I-12a).

8 *Give to the Lord, you families of nations,*

*give to the Lord glory and praise,*

*give to the Lord the glory due His name.* (Ps 95:7-8a).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Office is said daily to this point from Easter to the Feast of the Ascension at all the hours except Vespers, Compline, and Prime. On the night of the Ascension these verses below are added:

9 *Sing to the Lord, O kingdoms of the earth,   
sing psalms to the Lord.* (Ps 67:33a).

10 *Chant praise to God Who ascends*

*above the heights of the heavens   
to the rising of the sun.* (Ps 67:336-34a).

11 Behold, the Lord will give His voice the voice of power;

give glory to God!

Above Israel is His greatness,

and His power is in the skies (Ps 67:34b-35).

12 God is marvellous in His holy ones;

the God of Israel Himself

will give power and strength to His people.

Blessed be God! (Ps 67:36).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The above psalm is recited daily from the Ascension of the Lord until the Octave of Pentecost with the preceding versicles at Matins, Terce, Sext and None.

Also note that it is said in the same way, only at Matins, on Sundays and the principal feasts, from the Octave of Pentecost until Holy Thursday, because on that day the Lord ate the Passover meal with his disciples. Or another psalm can be said at Matins or at Vespers, namely Psalm 29, as it is contained in the Psalter, from Easter Sunday to the Feast of the Ascension.

***At Prime***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (III) As above*

*Have mercy on me, O God…*

***At Terce, Sext, None***

*Psalm (IX) As above*

*Sing to the Lord a new song…*

***At Vespers***

*Psalm (VII) As above*

*All you nations clap your hands…*

**[Part Three: Sundays and Principal Feasts]**

Following are other psalms which our most blessed Father Francis arranged, and which are to be said in place of the preceding psalms of the Passion of the Lord on Sundays and the principal feasts, from the Octave of Pentecost until Advent and from the Octave of the Epiphany until Holy Thursday. They are to be said on Holy Thursday since it is the Passover of the Lord*.*

***At Compline***

*Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary*

*Psalm (VIII) As above*

*O God, come to my assistance...*

***At Matins***

*Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary*

*Psalm (IX) As above*

*Sing to the Lord a new song…*

***At Prime***

*Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary*

*Psalm (III) As above*

*Have mercy on me, O God…*

***At Terce***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (X)*

1 *Cry out to the Lord with joy, all the earth!*

*Chant a psalm to His name;*

*give glory to His praise.* (cf. Ps 65:1-2).

2 *Say to God: How awesome are Your works, Lord,*

*in the vastness of Your strength*

*Your enemies shall fawn upon You.* (Ps 65:3).

3 *Let all the earth adore You and sing praise to You;   
let us sing praise to Your name.* (Ps 65:4).

4 *Come, listen, and I will tell all of you who fear God*

*how much He has done for my soul.* (Ps 65:16).

5 *To Him, I cried with my mouth*

*and sounds of music were on my tongue.* (Ps 65:17).

6 *And from His holy temple, He heard my voice   
and my cry reached His ears*. (Ps 17:7c-d).

7 *Bless our Lord, you peoples,*

*and make the voice of His praise be heard.* (cf. Ps 65:8).

8 And all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed in Him,

all the nations shall proclaim Him. (Ps 71:17c-d).

9 *Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel,*

*Who alone does marvellous (and) great (deeds).* (Ps 71:18).

10 And blessed forever be the name of His Majesty, and may all the earth be filled with His majesty. Amen! Amen! (Ps 71:19).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At Sext***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XI)*

1 *May the Lord hear you on the day of distress;*

*may the name of the God of Jacob protect you.* (Ps 19:2).

2 *May He send you help from (His) sanctuary   
and from Zion may He sustain you.* (Ps 19:3).

3 *May He remember all of your sacrifices   
and may your burnt offering be fruitful.* (Ps 19:4).

4 *May He grant you what your heart desires   
and may He fulfil your every plan.* (Ps 19:5).

5 *May we rejoice in your victory*

*and may we be victorious in the name of the Lord our God*. (Ps 19:6).

6 *May the Lord fulfil all of your requests! (Ps 19:6).*

*Now I know that (Ps 19:7a-b) the Lord sent His son Jesus Christ,*

*and He will judge the peoples with justice*. (Ps 9:9b).

7 *And the Lord has become the refuge of the poor,*

*a stronghold in times of distress,*

*and let them trust in You who know Your name*. (Ps 9:10-I la).

8 *Blessed be the Lord my God (Ps 143: lb)*

*since He has become my stronghold and my refuge*

*in the day of my distress.* (cf. Ps 58:17c-d).

9 *My helper, I will praise you,*

*for You, God, are my stronghold*

*and my God, my mercy!* (Ps 58:18).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At None***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XII)*

1 *In You, Lord, I have hoped, let me never be put to shame;*

*in Your fidelity, deliver me and rescue me.* (Ps 70: 1 b-2a).

2 *Incline Your ear to me;   
save me.* (Ps 70:2b).

3 *Be my protector, O God, and a stronghold   
that You may save me.* (Ps 70:3a-b).

4 *For You are my patience, Lord,*

*You are my hope, Lord, from my youth.* (Ps 70:5).

5 *In You I have been supported from birth;*

*from my mother’s womb, You are my protector*

*and of You, my song will always be*. (Ps 70:6).

6 *May my mouth be filled with praise*

*that I may sing of Your glory*

*and all the day long of your greatness.* (Ps 70:8).

7 *Answer me, Lord, for Your mercy is kind;*

*look upon me out of the vastness of Your mercies.* (Ps 68:17).

8 *And hide not Your face from Your servant;*

*because I am in distress, make haste quickly to answer me.*

(Ps 68:18).

9 *Blessed be the Lord my God* (Ps 143: lb),

*for He has become my protector and my refuge*

*on the day of my distress.*

10 *O, my helper, Your praises will I sing,*

*for God is my protector, my God, my mercy.* (Ps 58:18).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At Vespers***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (VII) As above*

*All you nations clap your hands…*

**[Part Four: The Time of the Lord’s Coming}**

***At Compline***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XIII)*

1 *How long, Lord, will You eternally forget me?   
How long will You turn your face from me*?

2 *How long must I place doubts in my soul*

*Sorrow in my heart each day.*

3 *How long will my enemy rejoice over me?   
Look, and hear me, O Lord, my God.*

4 *Give light to my eyes that I may never sleep in death,*

*that my enemy may never say: I have overcome him!*

5 *Those who trouble me would rejoice if I stumbled,*

*but I have trusted in Your kindness.*

6 *My heart shall rejoice in Your saving help;*

*I will sing to the Lord who has given good things to me*

*and I will praise the name of the Lord Most High.* (Ps 12:1-6).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At Matins***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XIV)*

1 *I will praise you, Lord, most holy Father, King of heaven and earth, for You have consoled me*. (cf. Is 12:1).

2 *You are God, my Saviour;*

*I will act confidently and not be afraid.* (Is 12:2).

3 *The Lord is my strength and my glory;   
He has become my salvation.* (Is 12:2).

4 *Your right hand, O Lord, is magnificent in strength;*

*Your right hand, O Lord, has shattered the enemy,*

*and in the vastness of Your glory*

*You have overthrown my enemies.* (Ex 15:6-7a).

5 *Let the poor see (this) and be glad;   
seek God, and your soul shall live.* (Ps 68:33).

6 *Let heaven and earth praise Him,*

*the sea, and every living thing in them.* (Ps 68:35).

7 *For God will save Zion*

*and the cities of Judah will be rebuilt.* (Ps 68:36a-b).

8 *And they shall dwell there*

*and they shall acquire it as (their) inheritance.* (Ps 68:36c).

9 *And the descendants of his servants shall possess it*

*and those who love His name shall dwell in it.* (Ps 68:37).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

***At Prime***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (III) As above*

*Have mercy on me, O God…*

***At Terce***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (X) As above*

*Cry out with Joy, all the earth…*

***At Sext***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XI) As above*

*May the Lord hear you…*

***At None***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XII) As above*

*In you, Lord, I have hoped…*

***At Vespers***

*Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary*

*Psalm (VII) As above*

*All you nations clap your hands…*

**Note:** This psalm is recited only to the verse “Let the whole earth tremble before His face” (verse 9) and the entire verse “Offer4 your bodies” is recited. At the end of this verse, “Glory to the Father…” is recited. Each day at Vespers from Advent until the Vigil of the Nativity, it is recited in this way.

**[Part Five: The Time of the Lord’s Birth**

**until the Octave of the Epiphany]**

***At Vespers of the Nativity of the Lord***

Antiphon: Holy Virgin Mary

*Psalm (XV)*

1 *Ring out your joy to God our help*

*and shout with cries of gladness!*

*to the Lord God living and true.* (cf. Ps 46:2b).

2 *For the Lord, the Most High,*

*the Awesome, is the Great King over all the earth. (*Ps 46:3).

3 For the Most Holy Father of heaven, *our King before all ages*

(Ps 73:12a), has sent His Beloved Son from on high   
and He was born of the Blessed Virgin Holy Mary.

*4 He called upon me: You are my Father (Ps 88:27a),*

*and I will enthrone Him as the firstborn, the highest,*

*above the kings of the earth*. (Ps 88:28).

5 *On that day the Lord sent His mercy   
and at night His song was heard.* (Ps 41:9a-b).

6 *This is the day the Lord has made;*

*let us rejoice and be glad in it* (Ps 117:24).

7 For the most holy beloved child was given to us,   
and He was born for us (cf. Is 9:5) along the way   
and placed in a manger

since there was *no room in the inn*. (cf. Luke 2:7).

8 *Glory to the Lord God in the highest,   
and on earth peace to men of goodwill.* (cf. Luke 2:14).

9 *Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice;*

*let the sea and all that is in it be moved;*

*let the fields and everything that is in them be joyful.*

(Ps 95:11-12a).

10 *Sing a new song to Him;*

*sing to the Lord, all the earth.* (cf. Ps 95:1).

11 *For the Lord is great and worthy of all praise.   
He is awesome, beyond all gods!* (Ps 95:4).

12 *Give to the Lord, you families of nations,*

*give to the Lord glory and praise;*

*give to the Lord the glory due His name.* (Ps 95:7-8a).

13 Offer your bodies and take up His holy cross

and follow His most holy commands even to the end.

(cf. Luke 14:27:1 Pt 2:21).

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

This psalm above is said from the Nativity of the Lord until the Octave of the Epiphany at all of the hours. Anyone who wishes to say this Office of St. Francis should say it in this way: First, the Our Father with the Praises to Be Said at All the Hours (p. 99); then the antiphon Holy Virgin Mary with the psalm assigned for each hour of the day and night. The Office should be recited with great reverence.

**PRAISES OF GOD**

You are holy, Lord, the only God. You do wonders (Ps 76:15).

You are strong; You are great; You are the most high;

You are the almighty King,

You, Holy Father, the King of heaven and earth. (John 17:11; Matt. 11:25).

You are Three and One, Lord God of gods (cf. Ps 135:2).

You are good, all good, the highest good,

Lord, God, living, and true (cf. 1 Thes 1:19).

You are love, charity.

You are wisdom; You are humility; You are patience (cf. Ps 70:5);

You are beauty; You are meekness; You are security;

You are inner peace; You are joy; You are our hope and joy;

You are justice; You are moderation; You are all our riches;

(You are enough for us).

You are beauty; You are meekness;

You are the protector (cf. Ps 30:5).

You are our guardian and defender;

You are strength; You are refreshment (cf. Ps 42:2).

You are our hope; You are our faith; You are our charity;

You are all our sweetness;

You are our eternal life:

Great and wonderful Lord,

God Almighty, Merciful Saviour.

**THE PRAISES TO BE SAID AT ALL THE HOURS**

Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty,

Who is and Who was and Who is to come (cf. Rv 4:8):

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

O Lord our God, You are worthy to receive praise and glory

and honour and blessing (cf. Rv 4:11):

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

The Lamb Who was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity, and wisdom and strength, and honour and glory and blessing

(Rv 5:12): Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

Let us bless the Father and the Son with the Holy Spirit: Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

Bless the Lord, all you works of the Lord (Dn 3:57):

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

Sing praise to our God, all you His servants

and you who fear God, the small and the great (Rv 19:5):

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

Let heaven and earth praise Him Who is glorious (cf. Ps 68:35):

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

And every creature that is in heaven and on earth

and under the earth and in the sea and those which are in them (Rv5:13): Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and the Holy Spirit:

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Let us praise and glorify Him forever.

*Prayer:*

All-powerful, most holy, most high, and supreme God:

all good, supreme good, totally good,

You Who alone are good;

may we give You all praise, all glory, all thanks, all honour,

all blessing, and all good things.

So be it. So be it. Amen.

**THE PRAYER BEFORE THE CRUCIFIX**

Most high,

glorious God,

enlighten the darkness of my heart

and give me, Lord,

a correct faith,

certain hope,

a perfect charity,

sense and knowledge,

so that I may carry out

Your holy and true command.

**THE PRAYER INSPIRED BY THE OUR FATHER**

O OUR most holy FATHER:

Our Creator, Redeemer, Consoler, and Saviour

WHO ARE IN HEAVEN:

in the angels and in the saints,

enlightening them to love, because You, Lord, are light, inflaming them to love, because You, Lord, are love, dwelling (in them) and filling them with happiness,

because You, Lord, are the Supreme Good,

the Eternal Good from Whom comes all good,

without Whom there is no good;

HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME:

may our knowledge of You become ever clearer,

that we may know the breadth of Your blessings,

the length of Your promises,

the height of Your majesty,

the depth of Your judgments.

YOUR KINGDOM COME:

so that You may rule in us through Your grace,

and enable us to come to Your kingdom

where there is an unclouded vision of You,

a perfect love of You,

a blessed companionship with You,

an eternal enjoyment of You;

YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN:

that we may love You

with our whole heart by always thinking of You,

with our whole soul by always desiring You,

with our whole mind by directing all our intentions to You

and by seeking Your glory in everything,

and with our whole strength

by spending all our energies and affections of soul and body

in the service of Your love

and of nothing else.

And may we love our neighbours as ourselves

by drawing them all with our whole strength to Your love,

by rejoicing in the good fortunes of others

as well as our own,

and by sympathising with the misfortunes of others,

and by giving offense to no one.

GIVE US THIS DAY:

in memory and understanding and reverence

of the love which (our Lord Jesus Christ) had for us,

and of those things which He said and did and suffered for us;

OUR DAILY BREAD:

your own Beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ;

AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES:

through Your ineffable mercy,

through the power of the Passion of Your Beloved Son,

together with the merits and intercession

of the Blessed Virgin Mary

and all Your chosen ones;

AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US:

and whatever we do not completely forgive,

Lord, enable us to forgive to the full,

so that we may truly love our enemies because of You

and fervently intercede for them before You,

returning no one evil for evil

and striving to help everyone in You.

AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION,

hidden or obvious,

sudden or persistent,

BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL,   
past, present and to come.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

as it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

**Appendix II**

**Liturgical Prayer for the Members of the**

**Secular Franciscan Order**

According to the OFS Rule (art. 8), the members of the Secular Franciscan Order are to join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of Christ.

The following are suggestions regarding how the Secular Franciscans may fulfil this responsibility:

1. ***Morning and Evening prayer*** from the Liturgy of the Hours, either in common or in private. These celebrations are to be preferred at the fraternity meeting.

2.***A shortened form of the Liturgy of the Hours***, according to forms adapted to the local Churches.

3.***The Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary***, especially in a revised form compatible with the structure of the Liturgy of the Hours.

4.***The Office of the Passion*** written by St. Francis of Assisi.

5.***The Office of the Twelve Our Fathers*** in one of its many versions that have been enriched with short biblical readings and also adapted to the structure of the Liturgy of the Hours—especially since this form of prayer still thrives in many parts of the world, has become a traditional expression of Secular Franciscan prayer and is a useful way of praying in everyday circumstances.

6. Other forms of liturgical prayer, approved by the Spiritual Assistant or by one’s spiritual director, as long as they contain psalms (or their equivalent), Scripture readings and prayers.

7. Special Prayer forms for the liturgical seasons, for example:

1. The Way of the Cross during Lent (with Scripture Readings.)
2. The Rosary or Franciscan Crown during May and October (with Scripture readings recommended)

**THE WAY OF THE CROSS**[[102]](#footnote-102)

1. Jesus is condemned to Death
2. Jesus accepts the Cross
3. Jesus falls the first time
4. Jesus meets his mother
5. Simon of Cyrene helps Jesus
6. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus
7. Jesus falls the second time
8. Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem
9. Jesus falls the third time
10. Jesus is stripped of his clothes
11. Jesus is nailed to the cross
12. Jesus dies on the cross
13. Jesus is taken down from the cross
14. Jesus is laid in the tomb
15. Jesus rises from the dead[[103]](#footnote-103)

**THE ROSARY**[[104]](#footnote-104)

***Joyful Mysteries*** *- Monday and Saturday*

1. The Annunciation
2. The Visitation
3. The Nativity
4. The Presentation
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple

***Mysteries of Light*** *- Thursday*

1. The Baptism in the Jordan
2. The Wedding at Cana
3. The Proclamation of the Kingdom
4. The Transfiguration
5. The Institution of the Eucharist

***Sorrowful Mysteries*** *– Tuesday and Friday*

1. The Agony in the Garden
2. The Scourging at the Pillar
3. The Crowning with Thorns
4. The Carrying of the Cross
5. The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

***Glorious Mysteries*** *– Wednesday and Sunday*

1. The Resurrection
2. The Ascension
3. The Descent of the Holy Spirit
4. The Assumption of the Blessed Mother into Heaven
5. The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

**THE FRANCISCAN CROWN**[[105]](#footnote-105)

*(The Seven Joys of the Blessed Mother)*

1. The Annunciation of the Angel Gabriel
2. The visit to her cousin St Elizabeth
3. The Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ
4. The Adoration of the Magi
5. The Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple
6. The Appearance of Jesus to Mary after his Resurrection
7. The Assumption and Coronation of Mary Queen of Heaven

and Earth.

To finish the Crown, say two Hail Marys in honour of the 72 years the Blessed Mother is said to have lived on earth. Then say one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the Intentions of the Pope.

*Note: The mysteries of “The Adoration of the Magi” and “The Appearance of Jesus to his mother after his Resurrection” are mysteries that are not included in any other Rosary.*



For more information on the Secular Franciscan Order:

Please see our **Web Site:** <http://www.ofsaustralia.org.au/>

or simply type in: Secular Franciscan Order Australia



***Saint Elizabeth of Hungary***

**St Louis and St Elizabeth are the Patrons**

**Secular Franciscan Order**

1. The post-nominal letters O.F.S. are Latin and stand for *Ordo Franciscanus Sæcularis.* In English *Secular Franciscan Order,* but the post-nominals should remain in Latin. In the past it has been known by the abbreviation “T.O.F.” which corresponds to Third Order Franciscan. They were also called Franciscan Tertiaries. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 43 (abbr: Church) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Pius XII, Allocution to Tertiaries (*Nel darvi)*, #1 July 1, 1956): *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* (abbr: AAS), VOL. 48, pp. 574-575 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity). 4. M. (abbr: Laity). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Code of Canon Law. 702:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. 1 *Celano* 18 , 115. *Omnibus* of Sources p. 329 (abbr: *Omnibus*); Francis of Assisi: Early Documents “The Saint.” p. 283. (abbr: The Saint). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 1 John 3:16; 14:6 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Laity. 30, h. Op. cit. (note 4 above) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cf. Test 10. (*Omnibus* p. 67.) (The Saint p. 125.) *“And I act in this way because, I see nothing corporally of the most high Son of God except His most holy Body and Blood which they receive and they alone administer to others.”* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Paul VI, Allocution to Tertiaries (*Salutiamo volentieri*), #3 (May 19, 1971); AAS, vol. 63, pp. 545-546; [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Primitive Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis (abbr: Prim. Rule). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Church, 8; [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests). 18b. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Church, 67; Laity, 4a,b,c. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. 2 *Celano* 198 (*Omnibus* p. 521); (Francis of Assisi: Early Documents “The Founder.” p. 374) (Abbr.: The Founder) In The Founder 2 *Celano* is called “The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul.” [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Church, 67; Laity, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Church, 41. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Church, 42b. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. St. Francis. “Letter to All the Faithful.”5 (*Omnibus* p. 93); (The Saint p. 46) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Rom 8:17: Church, 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. St. Francis. “Admonitions” 16. (*Omnibus* p. 83-84); “Letter to All the Faithful.” 70 (*Omnibus* p. 98); (Adm., 16. The Saint p. 134); ( Let. Faithful 70. The Saint p. 50) [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Rom 8:29. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 2 *Celano* 85 (*Omnibus* p. 433); (Early Franciscan Documents “The Founder” p. 303) (Abbr., The Founder) “Letter to All the Faithful,” 26 (*Omnibus* p 94); (The Saint p. 47) 1st O.F.M., Rule, 7:13 (*Omnibus* p.38); (The Saint p. 69. Most probably not 7:13 but 7:14. “*Whoever comes to them, …, let him be received with kindness.”* ) [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 1st O.F.M., Rule, 9:3 (*Omnibus* p. 39); (The Saint p. 70); Matt. 25:40. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Church, 31: Vatican II *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World), 93 (abbr: Church Today.) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Laity, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Church today, 67:2; 1st O.F.M., Rule, 7:4 (*Omnibus* p. 37); 2nd O.F.M., Rule, 5:1 (*Omnibus* p.61); (The Saint p.68); (The Saint p. 102.) [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Rule of Leo XIII, 2:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Church, 41e; Laity, 30b, c. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. 1 *Celano* 80 (*Omnibus* p. 296); (The Saint p. 250). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Rule of Leo XIII, 2:9; 3 Comp. 14:58 (*Omnibus* p. 941); (The Founder p. 102.) [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. St. Francis “Admonitions,” 21 (*Omnibus* p. 85); (The Saint p. 135. The numbering differs in, The Saint, after Admonition 18 XVIII. This Admonition is No 20 in The Saint); 1st O.F.M. Rule, 7:15 (*Omnibus* p. 38); (The Saint p. 69). [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Church Today, 78:1 – 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Can. 687 [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Code of Canon Law. 697. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Pius XII, Allocution to Tertiaries (*Nel darvi*), #3 (July 1, 1956); AAS, vol. 48, p. 577. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Code of Canon Law, 694. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Primitive Rule, 29 – 30 [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. 1 *Celano* 22 (*Omnibus* p. 247); (The Saint p. 202) *The sign is a Tau cross.* [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Primitive Rule, 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Code of Canon Law, 696. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Code of Canon Law, 697. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Primitive Rule, 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Primitive Rule, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Rule of Nicholas IV, Chap. 16.

    The Footnotes can be found also at: (Cf: Acta O.F.M. XCVII (1978) pp. 364-369) [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See Can. 210; 214; *Lumen Gentium* 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Rule 1., Footnote 1 and Rule 2., Footnote 5. Canon 303 of the CCL defines Third Orders: “Associations whose members live in the world, but share in the spirit of some religious institute, under the overall direction (*altius moderamen*) of the same institute, and who lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection, are known as third orders, or are called by some other suitable title.” i.e. “Secular Franciscan Order.” [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. After the Rules approved by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289 and by Pope Leo XIII in 1883, the present Rule was approved by Pope Paul VI June 24, 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. See *General Constitutions OFS* 85.2. When the Constitutions are cited without any other specification, the reference is to the present text. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See Can. 116; 301.3; 312; 313. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. See Can. 225, and the Discourse of Pope John Paul II to the OFS, September 27, 1982 in *L’Osservatore Romano,* September 28, 1982. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. See Can. 275 ff, *Presbyterorum ordinis* 12; 14; 15 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See Can. 304. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See *Rule* of 1221, Chapter 22; (The Saint p. 79); *Second Letter to All the Faithful* 51. (The Saint p. 49) [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See *Dei verbum* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. *Rule* of 1223, Chapter 10:8. (The Saint p.105) [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. *Ordo Poenitentiae. Praenotanda* 22 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See *Second Letter to All the Faithful* 25 ff. (The Saint p. 47) [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Ritual OFS*, Appendix 26, 27. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary*. (The Saint p. 163) [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. See *2 Celano*, 198. (The Founder p. 374) “He embraced the Mother of Jesus with inexpressible love, since she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us. He honoured her with his own Praises, poured out prayers to her, and offered her his love in a way that no human tongue can express. But what gives us greatest joy is that he appointed her the Advocate of the Order, and placed under her wings the sons to be left behind, that she might protect and cherish them to the end. “ Oh Advocate of the Poor! Fulfil towards us your duty as protectress until the time set by the Father!” [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. See *Rule* 1221., 17.3; (The Saint p. 75) *Legend of the Three Companions* 36; (The Founder p. 89 & 90.) *Second Letter to All the Faithful* 53. (The Saint p. 49*”We are brothers, moreover, when we do the will of His Father Who is in heaven.”*) [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. *Lumen Gentium* 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See *Gaudium et Spes* 31 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *See Gaudium et Spes* 67; *Laborem exercens* 16 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See *Gaudium et Spes* 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. *Apostolicam actuositatem* 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. See *2 Celano*, 125; (The Founder p. 329) *Legend of Perugia* 43; *Major Life*, 9. (The Founder p. 596. “Aroused by everything to divine love…”) [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See *Constitutions* 3.3; *Testament* 14. (The Saint p. 125 *“…the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel.”)* [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. See Can. 518. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. See Can. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See *Ritual OFS*, Preface n. 10 ff.; Chapter I. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. See *Ritual OFS*, Preface n. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. See *Ritual OFS*, Preface n. 13 ff.; Part I, Chapter II. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See *Constitutions* 8; *1 Celano* 103. (The Saint p. 272 & 173. “*Let us begin, to serve the Lord God, for up until now we have done little or nothing*.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. See Can. 312 §2. Where houses and parishes of the 1st Order are established consent of the Bishop for the erection of the OFS is automatic. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. See *Constitutions* 90.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See *Constitutions* 39.3; 41.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See *Constitutions* 81.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Each local fraternity is to have at least a register of enrolments (admissions, professions, transfers, deaths, and every other important annotation relative to the individual members), the register of minutes of the Council and the register of administration. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. See Can. 164 ff. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. See *Ritual OFS,* Part II, Chapter II. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. From Franciscan history and from the Constitutions of the First Order and the T.O.R., it is clearly evident that these Orders recognise that they are committed to the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the OFS in virtue of their common origin and charism and by the will of the Church. See Constitutions O.F.M., 60; Constitutions O.F.M. Conv., 116; Constitutions O.F.M. Cap., 95; Constitutions T.O.R, 157; Rule of the Third Order of Pope Leo XIII, 3.3; Rule approved by Paul VI, 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Cfr. *Constitutions* 51,1c; 63,2g; 67,2g. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Cfr. *Constitutions* 83; 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. *Lumen Gentium* 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. *Christus Dominus* 11; Can. 396; See *2 Celano* 10; (The Founder p. 249. *“Francis, go rebuild My house, as you see, it is all being destroyed.”* ) *1 Celano* 18. (The Saint p.196) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. See Can. 311. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See Can. 394; 756; 775 ss. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. See Can. 305; 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. *Paul VI, Apostolic Letter Seraphicus Patriarcha (June 24, 1978), in Acta Apostolice Sedis (AAS), 70 (1978), 454.* [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Vatican Council II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #38*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. See Franciscans at Prayer, Introduction, #28-30 [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. See Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS Rule), art. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. OFS Rule, art. 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. OFS Rule, art. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. OFS Rule, art. 22 and 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Ibid., art. 2, 5, 13, 22 and 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Ibid., art 4 and 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Ibid., art. 14, 22 and 24 [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Ibid., art. 5 and 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Franciscans have been the custodians of the Holy Sites in the Holy Land, including of the “Way of the Cross”, since 1343. Although many saints were devoted to the Stations of the Cross, few if any did more to promote them than St. Leonard of Port Maurice (1676-1751) Feast Day 26th November. In fact he went directly to the Pope for permission to set up the Stations of the Cross, outside the Holy Land, during his missions and retreats. That the Way of the Cross is today set up in almost all parishes may be attributed to him. As a Franciscan priest, he preached the Way of the Cross at missions for forty-three years and reportedly set up stations in 571 locations throughout Italy, including the Colosseum in Rome. See: Marion A. Habig O.F.M. The Franciscan Book of Saints. Franciscan Herald Press Chicago, Illinois 1959, p. 887. (Revised Edition 1979) [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. The fifteenth Station is a modern addition and is usually only added after the Season of Lent is completed. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. A pious tradition says the Rosary was given to St Dominic by the Blessed Virgin Mary. Certainly the Dominican friars have made it their own. It has been called “The Bible of the Poor” because illiterate people could not read the Bible. The Rosary allowed them to meditate on the life of Jesus and his Blessed Mother. In 2002 Saint Pope John Paul II added the Luminous Mysteries to the Rosary in the Apostolic Letter, *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. The most probable source for these Mysteries of Light is St George Preca a Maltese Priest. Feast Day 9th of May. He was beatified by St. John Paul II in 2001 and canonised by Pope Benedict VXI in 2007. He was a Carmelite Tertiary. Private Revelation says there are 15 Promises for those who say the Rosary. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. The beautiful story of the Franciscan Crown can be read in the life of the Servant of God Fr James of the Rosary. His feast is the 16th of October. See: The Franciscan Book of Saints. p. 774. (Revised Edition 1979). The story relates that as a young man he used to weave a crown of flowers for the statue of the Blessed Virgin, but when he joined the Franciscans he was not allowed to continue this pious devotion. However, Our Lady appeared to him and showed him how to make a spiritual crown or roses. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)