



- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

Part 6: Life in Fraternity

1. The Franciscan Family

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, 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 St Francis of Assisi. 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. Rule 1



A rope with three cords
does not break too easily

The Franciscan Movement

Francis, as you will know..., simply wanted to follow the gospel literally, wholeheartedly and humbly. Others were inspired by his example and captured by his vision. In a comparatively short time the little group of Franciscans grew into...thousands which needed organisation. Francis was careful to have every development of the Order approved by the Holy Father. The original Rule, a collection of gospel texts, became the final and definitive Rule of 1223 which the First Order Franciscans still observe today... there are three branches of what is called the 'First' Order of St Francis [OFM, OFM Conv, OFM Cap]. When St Clare and other women followed the example of Francis, the 'Second Order' was founded, known today as the Poor Clares [OSC]. Some members of the 'Third' Order of St Francis band together to live in community taking...the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and observe a Rule approved by the Holy See. They are therefore called the Third Order 'Regulars'[TOR]...The Secular Franciscan Order formerly known as the Third Order Secular, that is, Franciscans who live in the world as lay men and women...[seeking] to imitate *in the world* the ways of St Francis and his Brothers [now OFS]...[However] they soon came into conflict with the public authorities because of their principles. At Faenza,...the mayor wanted them to take the usual oath of obedience...to take up arms when the authorities ordered it. They refused; taking up arms was against their Rule. The dispute spread all over Italy...Cardinal Hugolino, a friend of St Francis, took up their defence. When he became pope, he ordered the clergy to take the side of the Penitential Brothers...[He] wished to unite the scattered brotherhoods into one body. Around 1221, cardinal Hugolino and Francis wrote the first formal Rule for the Third Order. We do not have this Rule, but it was certainly the foundation of the Rule of 1228 which we do have.

A True Order

The Secular Franciscan Order is distinguished from other that its primary purpose is the striving to live the gospel. Other groups may have a specific purpose... [but] as a lay Order, the Secular Franciscan Order stresses fraternity life, a quest for personal holiness and personal and fraternity apostolates as a way of living for social justice and peace among people.

Foley, Weigel, Normile *To Live as Francis Lived* (p 6-8)

lay associations
people in the Church in
life.

Define the following—

Order, Franciscan, Secular, Rule, Constitutions, Statutes, Charism

Scripture—



Eph 4. 1-16

I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life that us worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

But For each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ 's gift. Therefore it is said, ' When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people. ' (When it says, ' He ascended ', what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.) The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people 's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body' s growth in building itself up in love.