



- A RESOURCE FOR ONGOING FORMATION -

Part 6: Life in Fraternity

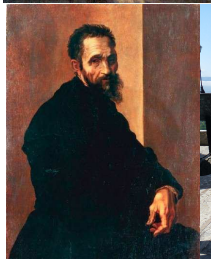
2. The Special Role of OFS & its Place in the Franciscan Family

All associations of the Christian faithful, whether public or private, by whatever title or name they are called, are to have their own statutes which define the end of the association or its social objective, its headquarters, its government, the conditions of membership and by whom its policies are to be determined, according to the need or utility of time and place. [CIC 304 § 1]

All associations of the Christian faithful are subject to the vigilance of competent ecclesiastical authority, whose duty it is to take care that integrity of faith and morals is preserved in them and to watch lest abuse creep into ecclesiastical discipline. [CIC 305 § 1]

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 love the gospel in the manner of St Francis by means of this Rule approved by the Church. Rule 2

There are many liberating aspects for people who became part of the Franciscan family as Tertiaries, [i.e. 'seculars'] in families and groups. Two of the most important elements were the commitment to reconciliation—that is, not taking up arms—and freedom from the oath of suzerain or *commune*. There were political repercussions to these, of course, but they did affirm the personal and religious liberty of Tertiaries, and were an amazing application of the gospel to their individual and social lives. It was in Florence in 1221 that the first fraternity of Tertiaries was established, and



from there the Third Order [i.e. OFS] spread all over the world, and included royals like St Louis of France and St Elizabeth of Hungary, former sinners like Margaret of Corotona and Angela of Foligno, children like St Rosa of Viterbo, and illustrious people like Michelangelo, Dante, Murillo, Christopher Columbus, Palestrina and Liszt.

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Scripture—



John 17. 15-23

‘I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth: your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

‘I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you Father are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them. ’