



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS  
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 2: "HISTORY OF THE OFS"  
sheet 8

6. From Leo to Paul  
[III] From 1950 to the Pauline Rule



International Congregation of the Leaders—2000 participants; 15 countries; 7 linguistic areas

- Congress reflected on how, without changing its nature, practical ways should be found to live the secular Franciscan charism
- maintain links with other lay associations
- coordinate efforts & work of Third Order [image of contemporary Tertiary given by French brother from Minutes, 'Whether it be a member of parliament or trade unionist or a person who dedicates himself to scientific research, to philosophical speculation, to social service, to family life, at the top or bottom of the social scale, who speaks in public or observes in silence, who chooses apostolic or political activity, he will manifest himself...by complete detachment from wealth, including his own will and self-love...']
- concluding resolution stands out: 'in addition to local Councils, regional, provincial, national and international be set up as soon as possible'
- request made to work out Constitutions as commentary & application of Leonine Rule—to update it in line with CIC (1917), link with Catholic Action, unity with & direction of whole Franciscan family

Pius XII, Franciscan Tertiary—two things of importance:

1. Letter to Italian Franciscan Tertiaries [1 July 1956]
2. General Constitutions [approved & promulgated, 25 August 1957]

The pope thought the Order was in a phase of 'organic stagnation' and 'spiritual tepidity' and indicated a programme of renewal that set out, in clear theological terms, the leap in quality which the secular fraternity should make in order to become 'a school of Christian perfection, of real Franciscan spirit, of zealous and prompt action for the building up of the Body of Christ.'

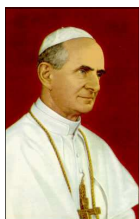
The Constitutions are one of the most extensive and complete texts of OFS legislation. They bring together, systematise and clarify whatever had previously been worked out, from the definition of its nature and objective to governance, divided between external [belonging to the First Order & TOR] and internal [belonging to the Tertiaries], from a plan of life—spiritually deep, complete and specific—to disciplinary norms. [Article 21 offered the 'possibility' of setting up Councils at a higher level, and the 'appropriateness' of expanding them to the interobediential level, national (even a 'general') 'president'] It was on the basis of Article 21 that, even before the Rule of 1978, it was possible to begin the process of unity and structuring of the OFS at an international level. And these Constitutions represent the point at which OFS had arrived on the eve of Vatican II

It is often said that two thirds of the Religious Orders that ever existed no longer exist. There are probably many and complex reasons why this might be so—quite possibly it is because they were no longer relevant.

With the death of Pius XII, and the election of Giuseppe Roncalli, Franciscan Tertiary, who took the name of John XXIII [itself a momentous choice—if you know anything about “Avignon”!], things were about to change **BIG TIME....**



constituted a beneficial earthquake regarding the way the Church saw herself. A new ecclesiology is re-delineated which is, in essence, that of Francis. The Council launched a new theology of the laity and the time was finally ripe to begin to gather together the fruits of reflection which had taken place over the past seventy or so years among Secular Franciscans—thanks to the enlightenment and prophetic vision of the great popes we have been considering, and others, whose sense of history and love of the Franciscan Family permitted this epoch-making turnaround.



Paul VI—was not a Franciscan Tertiary like his seven predecessors as bishops of Rome, but he gave to the OFS its new Rule with:

*Seraphicus Patriarcha* [24 June 1978] - affectionately referred to as the ‘Pauline Rule’

The process of updating the Leonine Rule of 1883 began officially in 1965—a letter sent to the four Ministers General of the First Order and TOR seeking this revision. With agreement, the long and tiresome work of revision began in March 1966—Rule [approved 1978], Constitutions [approved 2000] & Ritual [approved 1985]—and by April 1977 the final text was presented to the Ministers General for their approval, and the subsequent and final approval by the Congregation of Religious. The Ministers General made small modifications and added an Introductory Chapter, the Prologue, the First Letter of St Francis to the Faithful Penitents. This latter was a providential addition which perfected the Rule making it a document of the highest spiritual value that embraced the life and history of the Order from its earliest days to the present. It was an updated Rule, deeply rooted in the long Secular Franciscan tradition. We had obeyed Vatican II and gone ‘ad fontes’. Finally, the Congregation for Religious added the important Article 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.

Of the Rule, John Paul II said,



It is an authentic treasure in your hands tuned up with the Spirit of Vatican II and responding to what the Church expects from you. Love, study and live your Rule because the values that it contains are eminently those of the gospel. Live these in fraternity and live them in the world, in which you are involved and rooted by your very vocation. [International Congress of OFS 27 September 1982]