



ORDO FRANCISCANUS SAECULARIS
- Initial Formation for Candidates -

Module 4: "PROFESSION"
sheet 4

2. The Commitment of Profession

[1] Formula, Profession, Purpose & Promise, Value

FORMULA

"I, N. N., by the grace of God, renew my baptismal promises and consecrate myself to the service of his kingdom" [Ritual II, 31]

'to consecrate' = to devote, or dedicate, reserve & destine thing/person for God & his exclusive service [he places himself in the hands of God—so that from the moment of Profession he no longer belongs to himself; now he is God's property]

Obviously, the project to which one dedicates oneself totally by *Profession in the OFS*, is God's project, and the consequences deriving from consecration are precisely concerned with union with God, adhering to his saving plan and serving the kingdom by living in and for the world.



**PROFESSION,
PURPOSE,
PROMISE**

'profession' = from Latin 'professio', derived from 'profiteor' - to speak out loud [connotation of something official & public; public declaration of something/belonging to religion]

The term 'professio' was applied [amongst others] to the 'status of public penitents' - which is not without significance with reference to the Order of Penance.

'purpose' = from Latin 'propositum' literally 'that which is laid before me'; deliberate will to do something; plan; project

'promise' = from Latin 'promittere' basically to send out [which recalls the NT's 'apostellomai' - giving us 'apostle' - one sent out]; to guarantee, esp to promise by vow

Today, we distinguish between 'promise' and 'vow', which often makes a promise less significant than a vow. Vatican II preferred to bring in a change of terminology, *Lumen Gentium* [44] speaks of 'vows or other sacred bonds, similar in nature to vows' including under the term 'sacred bonds' the promises made in Secular Institutes.

In primitive monasticism, 'propositum' meant a firm decision to adopt a particular style of life [& persevering within it]. In Middle Ages, 'regulare propositum' etc meant intention to dedicate oneself to a particular religious style of life [found in many documents concerned with Order of Penance]. 'Propositum' stresses human freedom, without eliminating the aspect of 'vocation', freely given by God.

'value' = from French 'valoir' to be worth [so—worth, desirability, utility etc]

VALUE

What has been discovered from the primitive legislation of the Franciscan movement enables us to list the constitutive elements of the profession of the Brothers & Sisters of Penance:

- (1) obligation contracted before God
- (2) commitment to observe a Rule or form of life
- (3) definitive incorporation into the Order

The same elements are also constitutive of 'religious Profession', leading us to maintain that the 'propositum vitae' [or promise of the Secular Franciscan Penitents] is equivalent to a religious Profession. The original Franciscan Penitents were not 'laymen' or ordinary faithful; they were 'secular religious' - 'secular' being someone who lives in the world [saeculum], whether layman or cleric or religious. The meaning of 'Profession' cannot be understood in one sense only—as if it referred exclusively to those who have, as it were, left the world and are to be found within the confines of Order solely expressed in terms of the 'poverty, chastity, obedience' - all else being but a pale reflection of this commitment, and not really worthy of the title of 'Order' at all. Profession in the OFS has the dignity of a solemn & religious commitment entered into with God and the Church. The OFS is 'a lay Order, a true Order', a 'school of integral Christian perfection' - exactly like any Religious Institute.