

D. SIMPLICITY AND HUMILITY

Simplicity is not poverty. Simplicity means that a Franciscan lives close enough to the limits of their resources that they can rely on God's love for us to appreciate the unadorned wonders of creation.

Simple living is not always simple to do. The goal of Franciscan simplicity is to encourage us to live in JOY!! St. Francis challenges us to enjoy life not own it.

Humility requires a sense of humour.

E. SERVICE TO CHRIST CRUCIFIED

Is it by coincidence that St. Francis was given the wounds of the Crucified Christ, that is, given the holes of the crucifixion on his body? They were his reward for following Christ so closely, for his service to the Crucified Christ. St. Francis was acutely aware that Jesus had chosen to enter this world in poverty and to teach the poor that they too had a place in Heaven, despite their deprivation and hardships.

As followers of St. Francis, Franciscans too are called upon to carry their daily crosses.

F. THE NEEDS OF THE POOR

After his experience with the leper, Francis' world was turned upside down. He saw in Jesus everyone, everything and all creation. He recognised that following Jesus meant serving humankind. Francis first worked with the lepers, the most neglected and despised group in the society of his time. He preached in the streets trying to empower the poor and underprivileged people with hope and courage.



The Secular Franciscan Order is a SECULAR Order precisely because its distinctiveness, its identity, and its mission is meant for those people who are called by God to be secular in their life-style and also to exercise a ministry in the Church ordinarily as a lay person. This does not mean that only lay people can be members, the SFO has had Popes, Bishops, Priest and Deacons among its members. But the vast majority are lay people. So the Secular Franciscan Order is a special movement of the Holy Spirit, within the very heart of the Church. It calls for Christian living with a specific flavour which intensifies, stabilises and gives direction to a person's faith life, their prayer and service. It is a spirituality, a life-style, a way of apostolic activity, and an approach to community that guides and governs and permeates everything a person is and does.

Our Catholic Faith Prayer and Spirituality 2010-2011

13. Franciscan Spirituality



Questions for Reflection

1. Can you recall any prayer of Jesus, suggest what it was about, when and where Jesus was at the time and how he used the prayer?
2. Are there any biblical accounts of being a good neighbour which you can recall?
3. Can you recall a time when someone did something for you and you were unable to pay for what they did?
4. Have you ever had something done for you that made you feel humble?
5. Can you think of a time when you helped someone for no reward?
6. What do you think it means to be a servant of the poor?

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What Does It Mean To Be Franciscan?

The object of any religious order is the love and worship of God. How that is achieved differs from person to person and from Order to Order.

The Franciscan Order seeks to love and worship God by following the example of ST. Francis of Assisi and the way he lived his life in the service of God.



In reality this worship stems from God's love for us and our love for God: in other words from Gospel to life and life to Gospel. Francis lived his life trying to be Christ-like. He chose a life of poverty, prayer and service to God and others, in particular the poor.

In living his life Christ-like, Francis succeeded in coming closer to being more like Jesus than any other human ever has. It is the fact Francis was unlike Jesus i.e. totally human, that draws people to him and his way of life because 'being human' we understand. Although following Jesus is the aim, doing it the Francis way is human-like.

So What is the Francis Way?

First Order – Priests and Brothers. **Second Order** - Poor Clare Sisters

Third Order Regular - Franciscan Brothers and Sisters

Third Order Secular – Secular Franciscan Order– SFO & Anglican Franciscans
TSSF

Each of these Franciscan Orders has specific vows or pledges and complementary roles, but all based on the lives of St. Francis and St. Clare.

Becoming part of the Franciscan family is not easy nor a short process and it is not entered lightly. A great deal of soul searching is necessary because it leads ultimately to a life of commitment and giving. I (Rev. Pat Jeary) am a member of the secular Franciscan Order commonly referred to as the SFO; I was professed some 42 years ago.

So, I will focus on the Secular Franciscan Order which differs from other Franciscan Orders in that daily lives are lived in prayer and service of God and our fellow human beings within our families, in our villages and towns and cities and not apart from the World in the confines of Convents, Friaries and Monasteries. Secular Franciscans have to strive to love and serve God surrounded by and rubbing shoulders with the World, including all temptations. This is not an easy thing to do.

So What Do Lives in the SFO Embody?

- A. Prayer and good works
- B. Announcing peace
- C. Life in the Community
- D. Joyful Simplicity and Humility
- E. Service to Christ Crucified
- F. Servants to the needs of the poor

A. PRAYER

To Franciscans prayer is all important, for our very lives are prayer, every thought that is good, every word of comfort or compassion or encouragement and whatever we do for our fellow humans we do for God.

Franciscan prayer involves finding out 'who we are' and 'finding God within us!' Franciscan prayer is the prayer of ordinary people. This prayer is practical and tough, for it is found in people willing to meet the living God, as Francis met God in the leper by the side of the road, in the suffering and ugliness of daily life. Franciscan prayer is prayer in action.

B. ANNOUNCING PEACE

St Francis worked for peace. He worked and prayed to bring it about, no effort was too much; no pain too great if it brought peace. Francis went on crusades; he walked boldly through the Christian lines and demanded an interview with the Sultan. How he reached the Sultan's presence is a mystery, but something about this shabby little man which opened each guard post and he found himself face to face with the Sultan of Egypt. He made a great impression on the Sultan but was unable to convert him. The spirit of St. Francis must be the Franciscans'. Every Christian is called to create peace. For Franciscans it is a special calling.



C. LIFE IN COMMUNITY

Secular Franciscans do not live in a Friary or Convent, rather we live our lives out in the world, and so our community is boundless. Indeed it exists wherever mankind exists and we have an opportunity to be truly Franciscan in the way the love of Christ can be seen in our lives of service to others, in what we do and are seen to do in the world.

That we are able to help is the gift of our Heavenly Father, our talents and abilities have been given to us. It is Jesus himself who said, "Freely, you have received, freely give."

