

STEPS FOR ENTERING

1. Initially one joins the Fraternity for their meetings as a "Visitor" or "Guest" for at least six meetings.
2. Then the Visitor may make an application to the Fraternity to proceed to the Enquiry stage. During this period the Enquirer will be given a course of preparation for Admission to the Order. This second step also takes at least six months.. We call this preparation: "Formation".
3. Having been Admitted, or Received into Formation, the Candidate for Profession undertakes a further programmed which lasts for at least a year and a day from the date of Admittance
4. The Candidate now applies for Profession into the Order. The Profession is a promise to God to live for one's lifetime according to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

So we Invite You

If you desire to share in the holiness and happiness of Our Lord Jesus through the Way of Saint Francis of Assisi, if you wish to be an instrument of peace and social reform according to the well-known Peace prayer that was inspired by the lifestyle of Saint Francis, then we invite you:

COME AND SEE

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Secular Franciscan Order

**Saint Francis is
Inviting You**



Francis of Assisi

is known as

Everybody's saint.

In fact, many men and women love him or his example so much that they make a lifelong commitment to follow his way of life. Is God calling you to follow Francis?

Come and See!

ORIGINS To know the origins of a great movement is to understand it better. Francis, son of a rich merchant, lived in times which were filled with warring factions, with the struggle of the lower classes, with yearning for a better life. Francis dreamed of fulfillment through achievements and honours of knighthood. God planned otherwise. While Francis was convalescing from a grave illness, God's grace moved him to think deeply about changing things, beginning with himself. He converted to a new way of total dedication to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Francis' new lifestyle immediately attracted other men. So many came that he formed for them the Order of Friars Minor. Soon women too longed to live his simple and poor Gospel life. With the young Clare he founded the Second Order, of the Poor Ladies. Other men and women, who were not called to the religious life, desired to live in the way of Francis. He wrote a simple rule for them also. Thus began his Third Order, the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. It was approved by Pope Honorius III in 1221. For centuries it was called the Third Order of St. Francis; now it is called the Secular Franciscan Order.

GLORIOUS PAST Already in St. Francis time the SFO had many members. Through nearly eight centuries, it has continued to prosper. It has brought untold blessings to the Church and civilisation. It has been fruitful in much personal holiness. Many Secular Franciscans have been given official recognition by the Church as Saints and Blesseds. These saintly Franciscans came from all walks of life. St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, and St. Louis, King of France, are both patrons of the SFO.

PAPAL ENCOURAGEMENT The Popes have showered high praises on the Franciscan Way of Life. Pope Leo XIII promoted it enthusiastically as a means of social reform. He was a member himself, as were a number of other Popes, including Pope John XXIII.

Christ's vicars have ordered revisions of the Rule when changing conditions seemed to demand this for the good of the Order and the Church. Pope Nicholas IV's revision of 1289 remained in force for six centuries; Leo XIII's in 1883 was lived for nearly a century. After Vatican II a further revision was prepared and Pope Paul VI approved it on June 24th, 1978.

This revised Rule presents essential Attitudes for living the Gospel Way of St. Francis. It contains a strong challenge for men and women of our times to live the Gospel of Jesus as fully and intensely as they can while continuing to live and work in the world.

VALUES OF THE S.F.O. The greatest benefit derived from belonging to the SFO is to be heir to its time-tested and well balanced spirituality, which is rooted firmly in the Gospels. Vatican II stated that the supreme norm of holiness for all people is the Gospel. Centuries ago Francis was aware of this and bequeathed that value to us. The Franciscan way of life is fully centred on Christ. St. Francis loved Jesus intensely and imitated His virtues as fully as possible.

The SFO is not a finishing school for personal holiness. Rather it exists to fulfil the new Commandment which Jesus gave us "Love one another as I have loved you". (John 15:12) The SFO is about living out what we celebrate in the Liturgy of the Eucharist at Holy Mass, being 'sacraments' of Jesus and allowing ourselves to be broken and given for our brothers and sisters both within the Church and the world, regardless of personal cost.

It is about allowing God to use our lives to manifest His love to and for the whole of creation. It is of real value to be able to strive for such holiness in an Order, that is, in a Church approved Order with a Rule.

One must note that the SFO is a true Order and not merely a pious society or association. It sets true priorities for the practice of the Gospel virtues. It presents a programme of prayer and reception of the sacraments. The many thousands of Secular Franciscans of the past eight centuries proclaim loudly: It worked for us! The many thousands who are living the Franciscan Way today declare confidently: It works for us!

Belonging to the SFO means being part of the huge Franciscan family. This family includes more than three-quarters of a million living members, of whom about four hundred thousand are members of the SFO. It includes all the brothers and sisters and priests who live as religious in one of the numerous Congregations of the Third Order Regular who live the Third Order Rule. It includes the nuns of the Second Order as well as the priests and brothers of the First Order. We all share in the stimulating examples and the powerful prayers of these many brothers and sisters of ours.

QUALIFICATIONS Who can become a Secular Franciscan? Three things are required: first, one must be a Catholic actually living one's faith; secondly, one must join with the sincere intention of being faithful to the Franciscan Way for a lifetime; third, one must have the required age for making profession. Secular priest, permanent deacons, married and single people, rich and poor, and all ages are welcome. Other Christians can also be associated with the SFO.