

We Are an Order

Lay orders allow for the Catholic faithful to join an order of the church without the need to leave behind family and professional lives. Just like the religious orders, lay orders have a Rule of Life approved by the Holy See, a period of formation, a profession, monthly meetings and Chapters. Secular Franciscans do not take the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as the religious orders do; rather they make a lifelong profession to live according to the rule of the secular order.

Belonging to an order of the Catholic Church is a calling to live in deeper communion with the church. Secular Franciscans therefore live in full communion with the pope, bishops and priests. They are called to deepen their understanding of the church's teachings while working together with it in its mission. Secular Franciscans participate fully in the sacramental and prayer life of the church, including the prayers of the Divine Office.

Unlike clerical religious orders, members of the lay order effectively become the living church within the secular world. Called like St Francis to rebuild the church, Secular Franciscans are able to bring the love of God, the church and the spirit of the Franciscan order into the workplace and civil society.

Just as the first and second orders live in community with other religious members, Secular Franciscans also come together in fraternities to meet monthly with other professed members. In fraternity they pray together and make Jesus and the Eucharist the centre of their fraternal life. Each fraternity is canonically established and becomes a visible sign of the whole church in miniature. In fraternity they grow and support other members in their Franciscan way of life.

Unlike the friars and nuns, Secular Franciscans do not live in monasteries or convents, nor are they required to wear any religious habits/robes; rather, having declaring the whole world to be their 'cloister' they remain in the family home and dress normally while wearing an emblem of the Franciscan habit such as a Tau Cross around their necks.

Joining any order of the church is a vocation and a calling. Being a Secular Franciscan is a lifelong commitment, so a time of prayerful discernment is required. The Secular Franciscan Order is not a club, a pious prayer group or fellowship group; it is an order for the laity, a calling to live a deeper love of God and neighbour by following Christ in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi.



"Brother Fire" original painting by Christine Jentz.
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Secular Franciscan Order



Is God Calling You?

Do you feel an urge to do more than just attend weekly mass and say the occasional daily prayer? Do you feel God is calling you to a deeper living of your Catholic faith? If this is you then the Secular Franciscan Order is inviting you to journey with us and discern if you are being called to live a deeper gospel life in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi.



Who Are We?

Secular Franciscans are ordinary lay Catholic men and women who follow Christ in the footsteps of St Francis of Assisi. They come from all walks of life – married, single, professional, students, diocesan clergy, young and old.

St Francis of Assisi founded the Secular Franciscan Order almost 800 years ago for lay members of the church, who, inspired by Francis also desired to live the Franciscan charism, however due to their marital vocations, or their single status, were not able to leave family life to join the first or second Franciscan orders (Friar Minors and Poor Clare nuns). In 1221 Francis and his friend Cardinal Hugolino (later Pope Gregory IX) wrote a Rule of life for lay people to follow so as to live in union with the wider Franciscan family - thus creating the secular order.

Any Catholic adult aged 18 and above, who is not already associated with another order, is invited to seek admission into the Secular Franciscan Order.

What Is Our Mission?

Secular Franciscans desire to follow Christ in the spirit of St Francis, who himself is said to have been the most Christ-like person to ever live after Jesus. By modeling their lives on the example shown by St Francis, Secular Franciscans strive to attain Christian perfection by living in the image and likeness of Jesus. Through prayer, contemplation and careful reading of the gospels Secular Franciscans live out their Christian calling by going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

Francis showed us an example by devoting himself to a life of poverty – desiring to live the same poverty of Jesus. Through his total abandonment of worldly goods Francis was able to put Jesus at the centre of his life. There he was filled with abundant spiritual riches and developed a sense of perfect joy in his love for God, neighbour and all of creation.

Secular Franciscans aspire to imitate St Francis by placing Jesus at the centre of their lives. They seek a spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. They manage what they own in a spirit of stewardship for the benefit of all. They purify their hearts from the desire of needless possessions, power and wealth, while cultivating the Franciscan spirit of peace, humility, fidelity and respect for all life. They seek to become 'Instruments of Peace' in the world, and cultivate a love for all of creation, endeavoring to find the imprint of God in all created things.

Secular Franciscans live out their apostolate by remaining in the secular world. It is through their families, their day-to-day work and activities that they seek Christ and serve God by serving neighbour. It is through their work in the secular world that they are sanctified.