

Saint Francis saw the imprint of God in all created things – in the sun and the moon, animal and plant life, fire and water, wind and snow; hence all creation has a sacred quality. Secular Franciscans share in the love of all that God has created. They express a profound respect for all creation and use it for its intended God-given purpose. They speak out about the unnecessary exploitation of creatures and the physical environment. They take initiatives that care for creation and work with others in efforts to put a stop to polluting and degrading nature.

*Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon. (Rule #19)*

Secular Franciscans are at the forefront of promoting peace and goodwill. They do it by making forgiveness, mercy, justice, tolerance and love integral elements of the spirituality they strive to exercise on a daily basis. By finding the love of God in every person, they put aside all thoughts of violence and seek a positive approach to finding solutions to disputes, while praying constantly to the Holy Spirit for guidance.

Saint Francis of Assisi never lost his joyful spirit. Even as death was approaching he was able to express his personal sense of joy by writing what is probably his best-loved poem, 'The Canticle of the Creatures.' Secular Franciscans try to be messengers of the joy that can be found even in the adverse circumstances of life. Every circumstance is an opportunity to respond in faith and to spread the joy of God in others. By placing their trust and care in the Lord, Secular Franciscans continue to be living examples of God's love and joy even in times of trial and adversity.

*"I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what you are to do."  
- St Francis of Assisi.*

Pax et bonum!

For the complete Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order please visit our website

[www.ofsaustralia.org.au](http://www.ofsaustralia.org.au)



"Sister Earth" original painting by Christi M. Jentz, ©2017

## Secular Franciscan Order



*The Way of life*





# The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan Order is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the centre of his life with God and people (*Rule #4*).

## *The Rule*

*Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel. (Rule #4)*

Secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and works, as it were, they become a living gospel for all to read. Motivated by the power of the gospel they conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ. Through careful reading of the gospels they discern how to act in real terms in each of life's situations.

*Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church and in liturgical activity. (Rule #5)*

Family life is the first place where Secular Franciscans seek Christ and live out their apostolate. They make Jesus the centre of their family and make space for prayer and the Word of God.

Married couples live their sacred matrimony with the same love that Christ had for his Church.

Professed members strive for a life of charity. Many of its members devote much of their time working for the poor and marginalised in society through a variety of charitable organisations. Here they seek and encounter Christ in the living and active person while also being Christ to them, just as St Francis was to the lepers and outcasts of his time.

Secular Franciscans participate fully in the sacramental life of the church. By placing Jesus at the centre of their lives they seek him above all in the Eucharist. Regular Reconciliation is vital for the ongoing change of heart that the gospels call "conversion."

*Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper Spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. (Rule #11)*

There are many varying degrees of how to live gospel poverty, and each Secular Franciscan needs to be careful and prudent while discerning the best way to respond to it. Due to the very nature of family life Secular Franciscans are not required to live the harsh poverty and total abandonment to all material goods as St Francis did. Rather, they provide normally for their families without depriving them of their own needs. There is nothing wrong with being well endowed financially, however in light of the gospels Secular Franciscans are careful not to indulge in excessive luxury, extravagant tastes and needless wealth. In the spirit of stewardship Secular Franciscans have the responsibility to use the finances given to them as a gift of God for the service of others.

*Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship. (Rule #18)*