

OFS – Charism and Mission

OFS Monthly Formation

July 2023



Birthplace of St Francis of Assisi,
Assisi, Italy

Pope Francis to the General Chapter of the OFS- 15/11/21

“Your vocation is born of the universal call to holiness. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that ‘lay people share in Christ’s priesthood: ever more united with Him, they exhibit the grace of Baptism and Confirmation in all dimensions of their personal family, social and ecclesial lives, and fulfil the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized’.

This holiness, to which you are called as Secular Franciscans, as the General Constitutions and the Rule approved by Saint Paul VI ask of you, involves the conversion of the heart, attracted, conquered and transformed by the One who is the only Holy

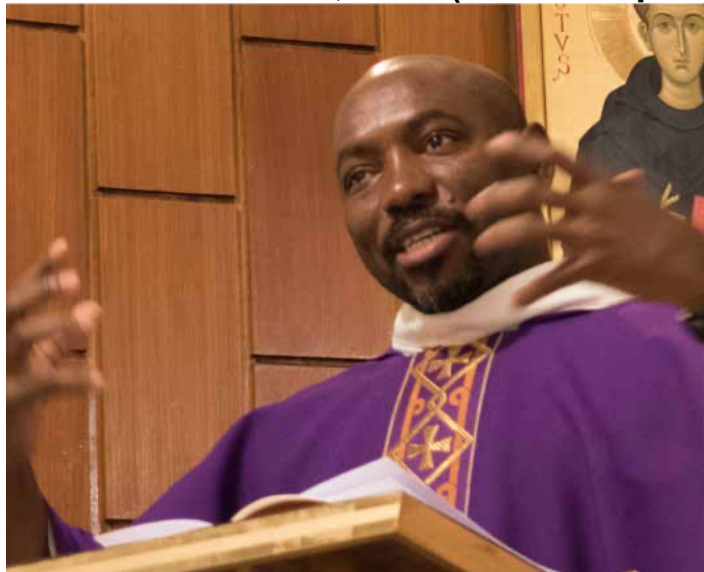
One, who is ‘the good, every good, the supreme good’ (Saint Francis, Praises of God Most High). This is what makes you true ‘penitents’. Saint Francis, in his Letter to all the faithful, presents ‘doing penance’ as a path of conversion, a path of Christian life, a commitment to do the will and works of the heavenly Father. In his Testament, he describes his own process of conversion in these words, which you know well: ‘The Lord gave to me, Brother Francis, thus to begin to do penance; for when I was in sin it seemed to me very bitter to see lepers. ... And when I left them, that which had seemed to me bitter was changed for me into sweetness of body and soul. And afterwards I remained a little and I left the world’ (1-3).

The process of conversion is thus: God takes the initiative: ‘The Lord gave to me to begin to do penance’. God leads the penitent to places where he would never have wanted to go: ‘God led me among them, the lepers’. The penitent responds by accepting to place himself at the service of others and by using mercy with them. And the result is happiness: ‘That which had seemed to me bitter was changed into sweetness of mind and body’. Exactly the path of conversion taken by Francis.

This, dear brothers and sisters, is what I urge you to achieve in your lives and in your mission. And, please, let us not confuse ‘doing penance’ with ‘works of penance’. These - fasting, almsgiving, mortification - are consequences of the decision to open one’s heart to God. Open your heart to God! To open one’s heart to Christ, living in the midst of ordinary people, in the style of Saint Francis. Just as Francis was a ‘mirror of Christ’, so may you too become ‘mirrors of Christ’.

You are men and women committed to living in the world according to the Franciscan charism. A charism that consists essentially in observing the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ ... I urge you to embrace the Gospel as you embrace Jesus”.

Father Pedro Zitha, OFM (General Spiritual Assistant – OFS)



'The continuing Mission of the Seculars' - 2022

In relation to the OFS and the mission we are entrusted with Fr. Pedro writes; "it is fundamentally important that each member of the OFS be aware that the mission is precisely the mission of the Church, that is, to evangelize, that is, to bring Christ to a world that no longer knows him, and at the same time to help those who already believe to put Christ at the centre of their lives, striving to give witness to Christ with their own lifestyle".

OFS Rule, Chapter Two, The Way of Life, Article 14:

"Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. Mindful that anyone 'who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself,' let them exercise their responsibilities competently in Christian spirit of service".



Father Benet A. Fonck, OFM states: "The Secular Franciscan Order is not merely a pious association or prayer group, but it is an evangelizing community of lay people with an evangelical spirituality, life style and mission."

Fr. Fonck (1945 -2016) past General Spiritual Assistant of the OFS

Gospel Reflection 'Jesus commissions the disciples':

"And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation'" (Mk. 16.14).

Consider, what might be your particular mission in this world, as a Secular Franciscan?

Franciscan Vocation prayer:

O God, help us to listen to your will by walking in the footsteps of your Son, - so that guided by the Spirit, our Franciscan lives may call others to holiness and service. Amen.



Image source: stlawrenceotoole.org