

“Concordances”

SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION CIOFS

Cari Dear Brothers and Sisters
of the Secular Franciscan Order
Peace and Good

The secretariat for formation CIOFS continues to work at your service, always seeking to strengthen our formative journey and the accompaniment of our formators.

We would like to present to you this material called 'Concordances', which has at its centre the reflection of our OFS Rule and which has as its objective that: in a didactic way the members of the OFS can deepen their knowledge of each article of the Rule with a reading that helps us to know and reflect from the sources and thus understand and deepen the sense of belonging from the Christian / Franciscan / Ecclesial dimensions, understanding that all these aspects are fundamental for any reflection on our Franciscan way of life, not making an isolated and unconnected reading, but an integral reading of the Rule and the sources cited.

- In the Christian sense: the Gospel
- In the Franciscan sense: sources and biographical texts from the life of St. Francis of Assisi.
- In the Ecclesial sense: texts from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and Words and reflections, encyclicals, exhortation from our Popes

This formation material is addressed to the stage of our ongoing formation and especially to the formators. It will be sent in modules to the national fraternities from the CIOFS General Secretariat every 2 months and published on our website.

We consider it important to deepen our way of life 'Our Rule' throughout our life, that is why we want to offer you this new material for our fraternities, taking into account that our formators can further enrich our formative proposals.

Your brothers and sisters,

SECRETARIAT FOR FORMATION CIOFS

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CONCORDANCES

Module 1 Secretariat for Formation Secular Franciscan Order

CHAPTER 1 IDENTITY OF THE OFS ARTICLES 1-3 OFS RULE

Chapter I of the Rule with its 3 articles offers us a view of the identity of the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS) which is accompanied by Gospel texts quoted by St. Francis himself in his 1221 Letter to All the Faithful, a letter which is known as inspirational to the form of life of the members of the OFS.

JESUS INVITES US...

John 17, 20 -26

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me.

Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am* they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

ST. FRANCIS INVITES US...

"THE LETTER TO THE FAITHFUL, ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI" EARLIER EXHORTATION OF SAINT FRANCIS TO THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

In the Name of the Lord!

Concerning those who do Penance

All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole mind, with their whole strength (Mk 12:30) and love their neighbour as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins (Mt 22:39), who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of Penance.

O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them, because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them (Is 11:2) and make its home and dwelling place (Jn 14:23) among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father whose (Mt 5:45) works they do, and they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 12:50).

We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. 9We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven (Mt 12:50). We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love (1Cor 6:20) and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others (Mt 5:16).

O how glorious it is to have a holy and great Father in heaven! O how holy, consoling to have such a beautiful and wonderful Spouse! O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and, above all things, desirable: to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for his sheep (Jn 10:15) and prayed to his Father saying:

Holy Father, in your name (Jn 17:11) save those whom you have given me in the world; they were yours and you gave them to me (Jn 17:6). The words that You gave to me I have given to them, and they have accepted them and have believed in truth that I have come from You and they have known that you have sent me (Jn 17:8). I pray for them and not for the world (Jn 17:9). Bless and sanctify them (Jn 17:17). I sanctify myself for them (Jn 17:19). I pray not only for them, but for those who will believe in me through their word (Jn 17:20) that they may be sanctified in being one as we are (Jn 17:11). I wish, Father, that where I am, they also may be with me that they may see my glory (Jn 17:24) in your kingdom. Amen (Mt 20:21).

Concerning those who do not do Penance

All those men and women who are not living in penance, who do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who practise vice and sin and walk after the evil concupiscence and the evil desires of their flesh, who do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, and who in their body serve the world and the cares of this life: They are held captive by the devil, whose children they are, and whose works they do (Jn 8:41) They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ.

They do not possess spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God, the true wisdom of the Father. It is said of them: Their wisdom has been swallowed up (Ps 107[106]:27), and Cursed are those who turn away from your commands (Ps 119[118]:21). They see and acknowledge, know and do evil, and knowingly lose their souls.

See you blind ones, deceived by your enemies: the flesh, the world and the devil, because it is sweet for the body to sin and it is bitter to serve God, for every vice and sin flow and proceed from the human heart (Mt 15:19, Mk 7:21) as the Lord says in the gospel. And you have nothing in this world or in that to come. And you think you will possess this world's vanities for a long time, but you are deceived because a day and hour will come of which you give no thought, which you do not know, and of which you are unaware when the body becomes weak,

death approaches, and it dies a bitter death. And no matter where, when, or how a person dies in the guilt of sin without penance and satisfaction, if he can perform an act of satisfaction and does not do so, the devil snatches his soul away from its body with such anguish and distress that no one can know [what it is like] except the one receiving it. And every talent, ability, knowledge and wisdom (2 Chr 1:12) they think they have will be taken away from them (Lk 8:18, Mk 4:25). And they leave their wealth to their relatives and friends who take and divide it afterward say: "May his soul be cursed because he could have given us more and acquired more than what he distributed to us." Worms eat his body and so body and soul perish in this brief world and they will go to hell where they will be tortured forever.

In the love which is God (1 Jn 4:16) we beg all those whom these words reach to receive those fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ written above with divine love and kindness. And let whoever does not know how to read have then read to them frequently. Because they are spirit and life (Jn 6:63), they should preserve them with a holy activity until the end. And whoever has not done these things will be held accountable before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgment (Rom 14:10, Mt 12:36).

THE RULE INVITES US...

Article 1

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God — laity, religious, and priests — who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi.

In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

Article 2

The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in this family circle. It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church .

Article 3

The present rule, succeeding Memoriale propositi (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Its interpretation belongs to the Holy See and its application will be made by the General Constitutions and particular statutes.

THE GENERAL COSTITUTIONS INVITE US...

ARTICLE 98

1. Rule Article 1. Secular Franciscans should seek to live in life-giving reciprocal communion with all the members of the Franciscan family. They should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular institutes, and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognize Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalization, and serve the cause of peace.

2. They must nurture a special affection towards the sisters of contemplative life, which expresses itself in concrete initiatives of fraternal communion. These sisters, like Saint Clare of Assisi, bear witness in the Church and in the world and through whose mediation they expect the abundance of grace for the Fraternity and for the works of the apostolate.

ARTICLE 99

1. Rule Article 6. As a living part of the people of God and inspired by the Seraphic Father, Secular Franciscans, “living in full communion with the Pope and the bishops”, should seek to know, and deepen the knowledge of, the doctrine proposed by the teaching Magisterium of the Church through its more important documents, and they should be attentive to the presence of the Holy Spirit who gives life to the faith and charity of the people of God. They should collaborate in the initiatives promoted by the Holy See, in a particular way in those areas in which they are called to work by virtue of their Secular Franciscan vocation.

2. The OFS, as an international public association, is bonded in a unique way to the Roman Pontiff from whom it has received the approval of its Rule and the confirmation of its mission in the Church and in the world.

ARTICLE 100

1. The vocation to “rebuild” the Church should encourage the brothers and sisters to authentically love and live the union with the local Church in which they develop their own vocation and realise their apostolic commitment, aware that in the diocese, the Church of Christ is truly at work.

2. Secular Franciscans should fulfil with dedication the duties for which they have accepted responsibility at their local Church. They should offer their support to apostolic activities as well as social activities existing in the diocese⁴⁶. In the spirit of service, they should make themselves present, as a Fraternity of the OFS, within the life of the diocese. They should be ready to collaborate with other ecclesial groups and to participate on Pastoral Councils.

3. Their principal service to the Church, which is a community of love, is to be faithful to their own Franciscan and Secular charism, and to give witness to fraternal sincerity and openness. They should be recognised in the Church by their “being”, from which their mission springs.

ARTICLE 101

1. Secular Franciscans should collaborate with the Bishops, and follow their directions in so far as they, the Bishops are the moderators of the ministry of the Word and of the Liturgy and the coordinators of the various forms of apostolate in the local Church

2. Fraternities are subject to the vigilance of the Ordinary in so far as they perform their activities within the local Churches.

ARTICLE 102

1. Fraternities erected in a parish church should seek to co-operate in the animation of the parochial community, in the liturgy and in fraternal relations. They should integrate themselves into the pastoral apostolate as a whole, with preference for those activities more consistent with the Secular Franciscan tradition and spirituality.

2. In the parishes entrusted to Franciscan religious, the Fraternities, through their practice of fruitful life-giving reciprocity, represent a model for mediation and provide a secular witness of the Franciscan charism in the parish community. Therefore, united with the religious, they attend to the spreading of the gospel message and of the Franciscan way of life.

THE CHURCH INVITES US...

THE CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

III THE CHURCH IS THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

797 "What the soul is to the human body, the Holy Spirit is to the Body of Christ, which is the Church." "To this Spirit of Christ, as an invisible principle, is to be ascribed the fact that all the parts of the body are joined one with the other and with their exalted head; for the whole Spirit of Christ is in the head, the whole Spirit is in the body, and the whole Spirit is in each of the members." "The Holy Spirit makes the Church "the temple of the living God":

Indeed, it is to the Church herself that the "Gift of God" has been entrusted.... In it is in her that communion with Christ has been deposited, that is to say: the Holy Spirit, the pledge of incorruptibility, the strengthening of our faith and the ladder of our ascent to God.... For where the Church is, there also is God's Spirit; where God's Spirit is, there is the Church and every grace.

798 The Holy Spirit is "the principle of every vital and truly saving action in each part of the Body."²⁴⁷ He works in many ways to build up the whole Body in charity:²⁴⁸ by God's Word "which is able to build you up";²⁴⁹ by Baptism, through which he forms Christ's Body;²⁵⁰ by the sacraments, which give growth and healing to Christ's members; by "the grace of the apostles, which holds first place among his gifts";²⁵¹ by the virtues, which make us act according to what is good; finally, by the many special graces (called "charisms"), by which he makes the faithful "fit and ready to undertake various tasks and offices for the renewal and building up of the Church."

799 Whether extraordinary or simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to her building up, to the good of men, and to the needs of the world.

800 Charisms are to be accepted with gratitude by the person who receives them and by all members of the Church as well. They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.

801 It is in this sense that discernment of charisms is always necessary. No charism is exempt from being referred and submitted to the Church's shepherds. "Their office (is) not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good," so that all the diverse and complementary charisms work together "for the common good."

THE POPE FRANCIS INVITES US IN WHIT HIS MESSAGE...

"With this Franciscan and secular identity of yours, you are part of the outbound Church. Your favourite place to be is in the midst of the people, and there, as lay people - celibate or married -, priests and bishops, each according to his or her specific vocation, to bear witness to Jesus with a simple life, without pretension, always content to follow the poor and crucified Christ, as did Saint Francis and so many men and women of your Order. I encourage you too to go out to the peripheries, the existential peripheries of today, and there to make the word of the Gospel resound. Do not forget the poor, who are the flesh of Christ: you are called to proclaim the Good News to them (cf. Lk 4:18), as did, among others, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, your Patroness. And just as the "fraternities of penitents" of yesteryear distinguished themselves by founding hospitals, dispensaries, soup kitchens and other works of genuine social charity, so today the Spirit sends you to exercise the same charity with the creativity required by the new forms of poverty."

Address of His Holiness Pope Francis to the participants in the General Chapter of the Secular Franciscan Order, Clementine Hall 15 November 2021

FOR OUR JOURNEY OF REFLECTION:

What is the invitation of Jesus and St. Francis in a personal and fraternal way that leads me to live in the Secular Franciscan Order?

What is the proposal that the Church and the Pope make to me to live my vocation in the Secular Franciscan Order in a concrete way?

What response and concrete action can I give personally and as a Fraternity to the invitation to be part of the Secular Franciscan Order?

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August 2025