

Saint Francis Fraternity

Ongoing Formation

September 2014

Article 6

They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.

Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialog of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.

Food for thought

Francis thought that the faith of the holy Roman Church was by all means to be preserved, honored and imitated, that faith in which alone is found the salvation of all who are to be saved. He revered priests and he had a great affection for every ecclesiastical order.

~ Thomas of Celano, *The First Life of St. Francis*, 62

There is no authentic Secular Franciscan ministry without union with the Church in obedience and cooperation. To live the gospel means to know the Lord, seek out his presence, and share his life and mission. To fulfill this three-fold goal, the Church is essential, for she reveals the person of Christ, his presence, and his plan of redemption.

~ Benet A. Fonck, OFM, *Called to Proclaim Christ*

One's profession in the Secular Franciscan Order is a special way of intensifying the effect of baptism. Entering a secular or religious order is not another sacrament, like ordination or marriage, precisely because its intent and result is identical to baptism,

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but on a deeper level. For example, a person may play a simple melody on the piano all by itself; that same melody is played again with harmonics and chords to give it an even greater richness, depth, and fulfillment. So, profession directs, intensifies, and deepens the “melody” of Christian life first played at baptism.

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Motivated by the power of the gospel, Secular Franciscans are called to unfold the living Christ and bring his message to all people regardless of age, race, creed, economic status, or the like. Especially worthy of consideration are the displaced persons and the unchurched and others in situations which make it difficult for them to appreciate what the Church is trying to do to reveal the presence of Christ and safeguard their God-given rights and dignity.

~ Benet A. Fonck, OFM, Editor, *Called to Follow Christ*

Questions for meditation and discussion

- Are there some ways in which you find you Secular Franciscanism a help in bearing witness to others?
- When you hear or read that Secular Franciscans are expected to share Christ's mission in the Church, what is your response?
- From the crucifix in the poor in the poor church of San Damiano, Francis heard the words of Christ: “Rebuild my Church.” In what ways might you, as a follower of Francis, be called to rebuild the Church today?