



A Religious
Life

In the Order of
St. Francis





Introduction

Enclosed are some questions and answers to help you what a contemporary religious order is like and how you may find joy and benefit in a deeper commitment to the Lord and in serving others.





How is a religious life defined?

That is not an easy question to answer briefly; however, our order defines a religious life as a commitment to Christ and our fellow man, lived out in a disciplined manner. As a witness of the Episcopal Church and the larger Anglican Communion, we adhere to the Daily Office, Weekly Eucharist, and to the rules of the order: Obedience, Chastity, and Poverty. Moreover, we believe in the use of one's gifts for the betterment of all God's people.

*“Above all the grace
and the gifts that
Christ gives to his
beloved is that of
overcoming self. “*

-St. Francis of Assisi



What does a religious life with the Episcopal Franciscans look like?

As a contemporary expression a Franciscan life it varies from Brother to Brother, yet it also has many common threads. Outside of morning, noonday, and evening prayers (The Daily Office) and the belief in Episcopal theology, many Brothers quietly find their niche in their parish, working their calling to the best of their abilities. These roles can range from visitation of the sick to assisting or conducting a church service such as Compline, to feeding the hungry, and much more. We see a need and we fill it, always with an eye toward the poor, sick, or marginalized.

Who joins your community?

Our community has the ability to embrace many different kinds of people. We live dispersed as many Brothers have done over the last eight hundred years. However, today's world allows us to communicate almost instantly, whether by e-mail, web, cell phones, so we stay in contact frequently. Some Brothers are separated by three thousand miles, others by only a short geographical distance.



What is the difference between a Monk and a Friar?

We are different from the prevalent perception of a religious life, or what television and movies present. We do not live quietly in a stone monastery set on the side of a mountain; we are friars not monks. Friars live and work out in the world, demonstrating the love of God in visible and tangible ways. A monk is a member of a monastic order; they reside at a monastery, have a cell in which they live, and are cloistered meaning set apart from the world. Friars, who we are, are active in the world. Further, of the two major branches of Franciscans we are considered contemporary.

“If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.”

-St. Francis of Assisi



What parts of my life will change?

This is not an easy life as it has challenges and rewards. You will have expectations placed on you by others. You will gain new friends, and you may have others slip away. Your lifestyle will change even more than it has over the recent years. Your values will intensify, your religious experiences will deepen, and your love for your fellow human beings will grow in ways you may not have anticipated.

What attracts men to a religious life?

Essentially, men who are attracted to this life desire the opportunity grow closer to God and to become a vessel of witness and works on behalf of God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This desire can be manifest in The Order of St. Francis with fellowship, resources, and the present assistance of fellow Brothers who can serve as a resource or witness.

“I have been all things unholy. If God can work through me, he can work through anyone.”

-St. Francis of Assisi



What are the requirements to men who feel called to this life?

There are several requirements, but the two main ones are:

- 1) You need to be baptized and confirmed in the Episcopal Church or in some instances received into the church. You can also be a member in good standing of a church within the Anglican Communion.
- 2) You must obtain a letter from your Priest regarding attendance and membership at your church.

*“It is in pardoning
that we are
pardoned.”*

-St. Francis of Assisi

There are other requirements further down the road but these two are of primary importance. The first position is that of an Associate Member.



Do I need to be an Episcopalian to become a member of this order?

Yes. And as stated earlier you can also be a member in good standing of a church within the Anglican Communion.

What if I am married; in a committed, long-term relationship; or have children?

Episcopal Priests can marry and so can our Friars. Balancing this form of religious life can be challenging in many ways. The other person is brought into a life that they know you are seeking, yet may not fully understand. Time commitments; deeply emotional experiences, both good and bad; and unforeseen expectations, require a strong, understanding and resilient relationship. As for children, clearly they are your greatest joy and responsibility. Insuring they are healthy, well educated, and living well is obviously consistent with the order's values.

“It is not fitting, when one is in God's service, to have a gloomy face or a chilling look. “

-St. Francis of Assisi



Is there an age limit to membership?

No, if you are called, you are called. As we are structured differently than some orders, living in the world and financially responsible for ourselves, we do not see older members as a potential hardship. The Lord stirs people at different times.

What about my secular and religious education?

A religious calling is not driven by the mind; it is an affair of the soul. Your education level has very little to do with your call to a religious life. The levels of education in the order range from a solid basic education to Ph.D.s and theological degrees.

What about my house and my financial situation?

Again, since we live in the world, we have responsibilities; however, we adhere to a simple lifestyle. The goal of this lifestyle is to free oneself from material items not truly needed, and allow time and resources to serve God. We do not ask others with whom we have relation

“Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words.”

-St. Francis of Assisi



ships to join in our lifestyle. We do, however, ask for an allowance to live simply. We don't require divestments of homes or finances, but more about that later as we define and discuss poverty.

Since you are spread out, how do you worship together?

The Brothers each have a personal altar in their residence. The size and placement is at the discretion of the Brother. This home altar is vital to a religious life as it provides focus and aids in religious discipline. Brothers that live in proximity sometimes share worship at church services, and convention is also a time of gathering as well.

“Start by doing what's necessary; then do what's possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible.”

-St. Francis of Assisi

Is this the only episcopal Franciscan Order?

No, The Society of St. Francis is another group; they are based in New York. The Franciscan Order of the Sacred Heart (FSC) (A Traditional Anglican Religious Order) is in Florida. Or the Little Brothers of Francis in New South Wales.



Are the brothers of the Order of St. Francis considered ministers?

No, because we do not receive Holy Orders, religious brothers are not considered ministers. St. Francis refused the holy order of the priesthood; yet toward the end of his years he was ordained as a deacon. We generally are not priests or deacons, but may be if it is desired. Priests, deacons, and Ecuristic Ministers have specific, clearly defined administrative roles with the church and church service. In other words, Holy Orders and the Order are not mutually exclusive.

Do I wear my habit all the time?

Your habit is to be worn at all official services of the church. It is also fundamental that no matter what you wear you wear the habit in your heart for all to see.

“While you are proclaiming peace with your lips, be careful to have it even more fully in your heart. “

- St. Francis of Assisi



What about chastity, obedience and poverty?

Chastity is a vow that brings sexual temperance. The Order expects such relationships to be characterized by fidelity; monogamy; mutual affection and respect; careful, honest communication; and the holy love which enables those in such relationships to see in each other the image of God. We denounce promiscuity, exploitation and abusiveness in the relationships of any of our members. The order intends to hold all its members accountable to these values.

Obedience is the complying with a request of the Guardian and, or the precepts of The Order and the Church.

Poverty is commonly seen as the state of lacking the socially acceptable amount of money or possessions. As Brothers, this is about intentional poverty, living simply in order to focus on God. Some Brothers choose varying degrees of ascetic existences such as living in small places with only the basic needs; however, used cars, thrift store clothing, and other expressions of thrift and simplicity are most common.



Discerning if this is the right life choice?

Clearly reading this short manuscript cannot answer every question that you might have about living such a life with the Order of St. Francis. So we might recommend a couple of things.

- If you have not been associated with a discernment group at your church you might want to consider such a process. Your priest or deacon can give you more information as to when the next group begins.
- Prayer is one of the most powerful means of gaining insight to your path. If you are not already doing so, pray about your path.
- Look at your reading material; what are you reading and what direction is it taking you?
- What would you tell your closest friend if they came to you with similar questions about their religious path?
- What religious endeavors have been most rewarding?



- What have life's ups and downs taught you?
- Am I drawn to this life, pushed toward this life, or both?
- Am I at crossroads or transition point in my life?
- Have I explored this type of life before and am I coming around again?

A Partial List of Famous Franciscans Including Third Order Franciscans

- St. Agnes of Assisi (St. Clare's sister)
- St. Agnes of Bohemia
- St. Anthony of Padua
- St. Bernardine of Siena
- St. Bonaventure
- St. Bridget of Sweden
- St. Catherine of Bologna
- Christopher Columbus
- St. Clare
- St. Colette
- Dante Alighieri
- St. Didacus of St. Nicholas
- St. Elizabeth (Queen of Hungary)
- St. Elizabeth (Queen of Portugal)
- St. Elizabeth of Thuringia
- St. Ferdinand III (King of Spain)
- St. Francis Solano
- Franz List
- Bl. Pope Gregory X
- St. Ignatius of Laconi
- St. Ives
- St. Joan of Arc
- St. John Bosco
- St. John of Capistrano
- St. John Vianney
- Pope John XXIII
- St. Joseph of Cupertino



- Bl. Junipero Serra
- St. Lawrence of Brindisi
- St. Louis IX (King of France)
- Louis Pasteur
- Cardinal Manning
- St. Margarita da Cortona
- Pope Martin V
- St. Maximilian Kolbe
- Michelangelo
- St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina
- St. Paschal Baylon
- St. Peter of Alacantara
- St. Thomas More
- St. Veronica Giuliani

Would you like to know more?

Please feel free to contact Br. Zane Young at:

OSFFrancisicans@aol.com

Pax et Bonum

