



The Order of Saint Francis

General Rule of Life

As members of the Order of Saint Francis (OSF), in humble recognition of our vows of Obedience, Chastity, and Poverty, we commit ourselves to the observance of this “Rule of Life” according to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of St. Francis of Assisi.

Reception into the Order

“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:4).

Each Member shall be baptized and a confirmed member, in good standing, of a church within the Anglican Communion, in communion with the See of Canterbury, being active in the Sacraments and life of the Church, and at least 18 years of age.

Postulancy

A required period of time, being at least six (6) months, shall be spent by each new member upon entry into the Order of Saint Francis unless dispensation is granted by the Guardian of the Order in consultation with the Bishop Visitor. This period of time is to be spent in prayer, study, reflection, and further discernment. All new members will seek the assistance of a spiritual adviser and attend regular formation meetings with a formation director. Postulants shall be invested in the Franciscan tunic and cincture. Regular attendance at Eucharist and daily prayer in communion with our brothers is a requisite for spiritual development.

Novitiate

A required period of time, being at least one (1) year, shall be spent by each member entering the novitiate period unless dispensation is granted by the Guardian of the Order in consultation with the Bishop Visitor. This period of time is to be spent in further study of Franciscan theology and life, prayer, and reflection on being immersed within religious life. Continued conversation between the novice and his spiritual director and further direction from the Order’s formation director shall seek to reflect the spiritual growth and increasing knowledge of the

Franciscan life. The novice shall be invested in the Franciscan tunic and cincture with appropriate knots. Regular attendance at Eucharist and continued daily prayer in communion with the brothers adds to the richness and fullness of the religious life within Community.

First Profession

A required period of time beyond the Novitiate, not to exceed two (2) years in length unless dispensation is granted by the Guardian of the Order in consultation with the Bishop Visitor. During this time, the professed shall reflect on his previous days within the Order giving thought to Franciscan ideals, theology, and what it means to live a “religious life” within the structure of professed vows. Serious consideration is given to further adherence to the vows of the Order and to living under the “Franciscan ideal” of life during this time. Professed members shall be invested in the Franciscan tunic, capuche with hood, and cincture with three knots. Professed members engage themselves in totality with daily religious life and prayer, working actively with their parish, and seeking to find meaningful ministry to the outside world and spreading the love and word of Jesus Christ to others they encounter.

Life Profession

At such time as he feels called by God, the professed brother may appeal to the Guardian of the Order to make a vow of “Life Profession” within the Order. The professed shall then, upon approval of the Guardian, be granted the status of “Life Professed” within the Order. He shall continue with his studies and spiritual growth while taking on a greater role within the Order as a mentor to those brothers in need of spiritual guidance.

Release from the Order

A brother may request to be released from his vows and the Order by written appeal to the Guardian, stating the reason(s) and need for dispensation from the Vows and Rule. The Guardian shall confer with this brother regarding the request and if granted, the Guardian shall release the brother from the Order and request that any and all property held by the Order be returned to him at that time. The Guardian shall notify the brother of his release from the Order and forward this information to the Bishop Visitor.

Corporate and Personal Worship

“Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

Holy Eucharist

Members of the community will attend, and receive regularly, the Eucharist, with daily communion being the ideal. In this most Holy Sacrament, Jesus Christ is truly present among His brothers and the sharing of this Sacrament together as a community is regarded as a special blessing for each of us.

Daily Prayer

Members are to observe the corporate praying of the four Daily Offices (i.e., Morning Prayer, Noonday, Evening Prayer, and Compline), as each is able. In addition, members are asked to observe at least one hour of personal prayer or meditation each day.

Ministry

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

As it has been said best in the Epistle of St. James (2:17): “So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.” Each

member shall perform some ministry of active service to the benefit of the Church (e.g., lay reader, Eucharistic Minister, ministries to the elderly, the sick, the poor, and/or those in prison.) Such works bring great peace and a fulfillment of the true Franciscan spirit. All works and ministries for which members are responsible shall be productive and shall be carried out joyfully as guided by the Guardian of the Order. Members are prohibited from accepting money or personal items, except for the needs of their ministries and the needs of others.

A Franciscan in the World

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Remembering that each individual is our encounter with the image of Christ, members shall, at all times, conduct themselves in humility and with gentleness. Members are to use discretion when participating in conversations and dialogue with others. Members are not to be quarrelsome or judgmental, but shall be peaceable and thoughtful as is becoming to all. Likewise, members shall be gracious and give thanks for whatever the Holy Spirit makes available to them.

Study

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they shall have their fill” (Matthew 5:6).

Our brother and Savior Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and with all your mind” (Mark 12:30). Members are therefore urged to study frequently and to participate in dialogue in order to make educated decisions

regarding their continuing spiritual journey and life in Christ Jesus. Whatever is studied, careful attention will be given to Holy Scripture, the writings of our Brother Francis, Sister Claire, and other Franciscans, along with the Book of Common Prayer. Other subjects such as church history, ethics, theology, music, and comparative religious studies will also be given attention, so as to enrich and aid in the education of the community.

Reconciliation

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

A great emphasis and a humble awareness of the social nature of sin, as well as the nature of forgiveness shall be stressed in the Franciscan manner. All members will observe a daily examination of conscience and seek the benefits of reconciliation and absolution as their conscience requires.

Retreats

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

Our brother Francis often sought after solitude and silence for periods of personal prayer and contemplation. Members will be asked to take a retreat time of silence, contemplation, and prayer at least once per year or as directed by the Guardian of the community, both for their own spiritual benefit as well as that of the community.

Common Living Quarters, Possessions, and Government

“Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:9).

Those members living together communally in a friary or common house shall follow the vow of chastity in that relationships of a sexual nature between fellow brothers is detrimental to the good order of the house and shall be forbidden.

All members residing in a friary or common house will join together in daily prayer, worship, meals, work, ministry, and the general operations of the household whenever possible.

Those who are living apostolically or alone shall join the community for activities and retreats whenever possible in order to share in the joys of brotherhood within the Order.

Possessions

The community itself shall not hold nor possess any real property or asset. Any real property and or assets may be held in trust for the use of the Order by an Advisory Board, its members selected to serve from various entities within the Anglican Communion.

Whatever items may be given to the community are to be used according to the needs, and for the common good, of the Order, and for all to share in what is received.

Government

In keeping with the Franciscan tradition, the governance of the community will be determined in democratic fashion by all professed members, with the final approval of the Bishop Visitor. The Guardian shall be elected from the professed brothers and shall serve for a period of time which will be determined by the Bishop Visitor. The Guardian shall represent the Order before official matters of the Church, other religious orders, and the Advisory Board.