

## Post-Vatican II Secular Franciscan Identity

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Forty years after the close of the Second Vatican Council, some of us can still remember the priest with his back to the congregation as he celebrated mass. We can recite the Our Father in Latin. Communion lines were shorter. Confession lines were longer. Women covered their heads. All knelt at the altar rail. There was an altar rail! All received Communion on the tongue. Our role was more of a spectator rather than a participant.

Vatican Council II reaffirmed for us that, by virtue of our baptismal grace, all are called to sanctity, that there is no distinction among us – we are radically equal, and all are entitled to equal dignity. The Council stated, unequivocally, that the lay faithful were co-responsible with the religious and clergy for the life and mission of the Church.

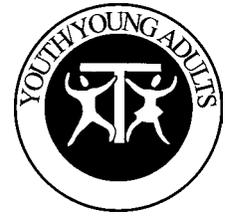
St. Francis understood and proclaimed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, what the Council decreed 40 years ago. In essence, both St. Francis and the Second Vatican Council recognized that we have a share in the responsibility of the Church's mission to spread the Gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. St. Francis, our inspiration, understood that the first step in the evangelical life is a "...radical interior change which the gospel itself calls conversion." (Rule, Art. 7)

St. Francis was a Gospel purist. He acted on Gospel inspiration. The Gospels provided direction for his and his brothers' lives. Our Rule tells us to consider the Gospels as "...the gift of the Father's love, [and] the way to him, [and] the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us...going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel." (Art. 4) The Gospels led Francis into new and deeper insights into God's love and God's will. Following Francis' example, we are not to be discouraged by our or other's imperfections "...trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon." (Art. 19)

Fraternity is our path to God. It's not a smooth path. It often becomes rocky and overgrown with thorn bushes. Fraternity makes the journey bearable - sometimes. And sometimes, the rocks and thorn bushes are the fraternity. If we persevere, these challenges become virtues of kindness, faithfulness, hope, and love. Christ and his disciples, St. Francis and his brothers, lived the life of fraternity. Fraternity is our privileged place. We live, pray and minister with imperfect people just like ourselves. In conclusion, if we remain faithful to our Secular Franciscan vocation, we will fulfill the mandate of the Second Vatican Council and the inspiration of our Father Francis.

## Liturgy

Lori Taormina, age 22  
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When we are called to Worship, we are called to be the Assembly of God. Liturgy is the communal celebration of this assembly by the church. It is people gathering, not only to encounter God, but also to participate fully and to give service to others. Liturgy came alive for me with the millions of youth during World Youth Days 2005.

I departed for Vossenack, Germany, to the Youfra gathering, by putting my trust in God. Praising and worship was happening when we first stepped through the doors. I didn't know what we were singing, but I laughed and danced with the rest of them. We became what God had planned; a Franciscan Family.

I discovered that liturgy not only happens in church, but in classrooms and meeting halls. We gathered for lectures, prayers, song, and dance. I saw myself becoming one with everyone through my interactions.

During the opening Youfra Mass we poured dirt from our hometown on the ground under the flagpole. My heart was bursting with joy, as I felt truly connected with Christ and his people. We were raising hands our hands towards the heavens, and singing like our lungs were going to burst.

With my new Franciscan family and my heart renewed with the love of Christ, our small group set out for World Youth Day.

Liturgy means more than just "Mass." For our group, we worshiped at night with a closing prayer and in the morning with prayer and reflection. Liturgy also occurred for me on our long walks to our destinations, and on the school playground.

Our pilgrimage to be with Pope Benedict XVI for the vigil and closing mass was a challenge. I looked around at all who had gathered and knew that we were a sign of God's Reign to the world. Once gathered, we became a sign of God's promise to us all and to our Church. It also reminded me that my faith is greater than just me; it became a night of prayer and peace. I only hope that the Eucharist that I received from Pope Benedict XVI does not stay within my body, but is a living sign of my faith to all. I hope to bring the Eucharist out into the world and share it with others through my actions and service.