

SECULARITY AS A CHARACTERISTIC ELEMENT OF SECULAR FRANCISCAN IDENTITY

CONCLUSIONS OF THE SFO GENERAL CHAPTER MEXICO, OCTOBER, 1993

2. Secularity as a characteristic element of Secular Franciscan identity

For a long time, the SFO has functioned as a pious association of persons devoted to Saint Francis, in the widespread conviction that the spiritual life is distinct and separate from the needs and experiences of everyday life.

Nowadays, after the Second Vatican Council and through the force of the new Rule, which has restored to the Order its autonomy, its unity and its secular nature, the SFO is changing its past orientations and is becoming more conscious of its secular dimension. As Secular Franciscans, we are called:

- - to render witness that the sacred is strongly present in the world;
- - to live a life in which one can hear the canticle of Saint Francis;
- - to introduce the Gospel of Christ in all aspects of modern life.

We are called to witness - with our faith, our example and our actions - the mystery of Christ's incarnation in our own body and in our activities lived in the day to day situations of our life.

However, in search for our specific identity, we should remain intimately united with the other components of the Franciscan Family. We should listen to the call of the Church in its documents and to develop in our Fraternities a social, human, political, Christian and Franciscan formation, as well as our living together in Fraternity. We should develop and live apostolic initiative in line with our own specific spirituality.

If we have the courage to proclaim the word of God from the altar, we should strive to work seriously to overcome the injustices denounced in the Gospel. When we explain the word of God as catechists, we should also work to eliminate illiteracy. If we feel ourselves touched by the liturgical environment and glorify God in singing, we should work primarily to restore the environment and to free it from the effects of contamination which disfigures the image of God in His creatures.

4. Secularity in work and social life

In line with his or her vocation, the duty of a secular (lay) Christian encompasses the redemption of all human activities: work, science, technology, culture, art, politics, in order to snatch them away from the power of sin and bring them into the transparent light of God's design.

Daily work, as a gift of God, is a process of personal realization and of satisfaction in so far as it serves our brothers and sisters and spreads in our professional sphere Christian and Franciscan values.

Consequently Secular Franciscans:

- - defend the gift of work;
- - commit themselves to support legislation establishing a "code of ethics" based on justice in the light of Saint Francis' concept of work;
- - take work out of its conditioning factors (consumerism, mania for efficiency) to regain a Franciscan culture of work;
- - commit themselves to favor initiatives in support of young people in search of their first job, those who have lost their jobs, retired people in difficult situations

They concretely support and/or promote initiatives intended to:

- - create places of welcome for children, young people, unmarried mothers, the elderly, the sick, refugees, immigrants;
- - create new jobs;
- - start programs of professional training;
- - create social volunteer groups;
- - all of this in support of poor and marginalized workers, who find it difficult to believe in the love of our Father because so many brothers and sisters fail to witness to this love.