

Are you called to the Third Order Secular of St. Francis?

The Third Order Secular of St. Francis is an ecclesiastical association of the laity, originally founded by St. Francis of Assisi. It is a state of perfection for persons living in the world. The religious strive after perfection by observing the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience and live in community according to their Rule, whereas the members of the Third Order Secular live in the spirit of the vows in fraternal unity according to their own separate Rule.

Mr. Tony La Rosa

St. Pius X vindicates the religious purpose of the Third Order in a special document, wherein he asserts that the Third Order "does not differ from the other two Franciscan Orders in nature but only in as far as it pursues the same purpose in a way peculiar to itself." As St. Pius X states this, we can affirm that the purpose of the Third Order consists in this - that its members put into everyday practice the precepts of Gospel perfection and serve as models of Christian life for the imitation of others.

Pope Benedict XV gives the following admonition: "Our Franciscan Tertiaries shall by purity of faith, by innocence of life, and by cheerful zeal diffuse far and wide the good odor of Christ, and be to the brethren that have gone astray both a reminder and an invitation to come to a sense of their duties. This the Church asks, and expects of them."

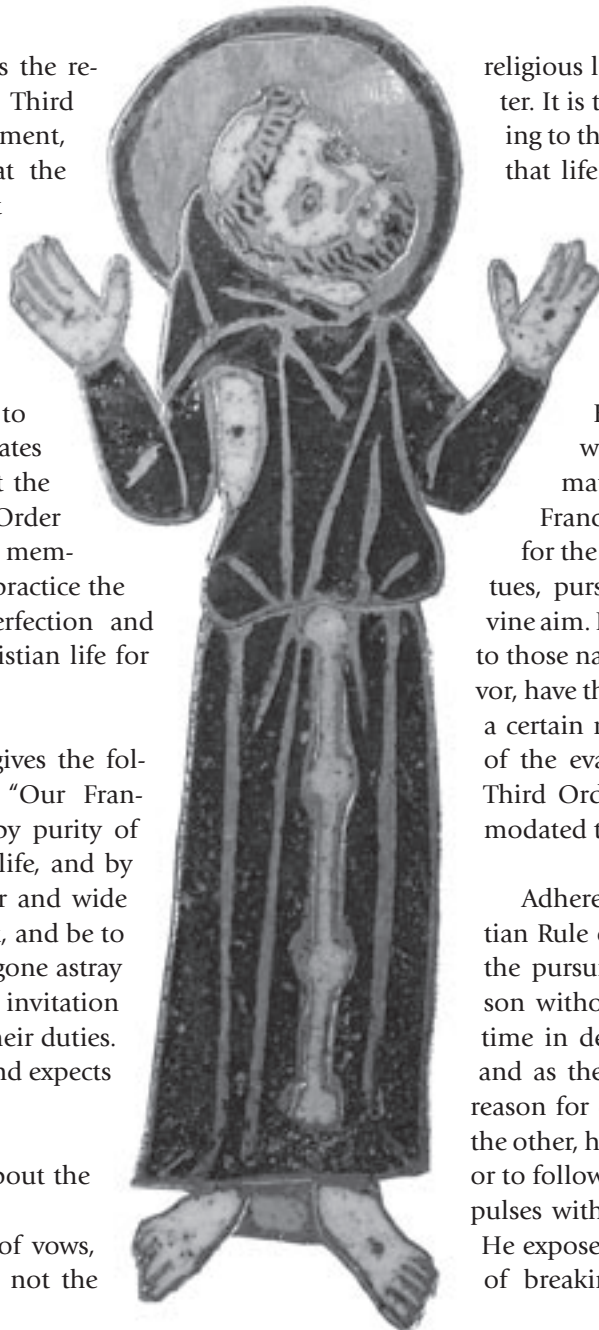
Pope Pius XI says about the Third Order:

"It is not the rigor of vows, not a life in common, not the

religious life according to the letter. It is the religious life according to the spirit. It is the spirit of that life and perfection carried into the family, into everyday life - the ordinary life of the world."

And our beloved Holy Father Leo XIII wonderfully states: "As a matter of fact, the first two Franciscan Orders, shaped for the practice of superior virtues, pursue a more perfect, divine aim. But they are open to few, to those namely who, by God's favor, have the grace of aspiring with a certain rare zeal to the sanctity of the evangelical counsels. The Third Order, however, is accommodated to the many."

Adherence to a practical Christian Rule of life is a great help in the pursuit of perfection. A person without a rule wastes much time in deliberating what to do, and as there is often no decisive reason for doing the one thing or the other, he is liable to do nothing or to follow merely his natural impulses without a thought of God. He exposes himself to the danger of breaking resolutions and of



delaying and omitting duties. The result will be inconstancy and weakness of character. On the other hand, obedience to a good rule saves time, opposes self indulgence and moodiness, necessitates many acts of virtue, fosters regularity and constancy in the practice of piety, strengthens the will, and imparts order to life. The Third Order is not for the few as are the other Franciscan Orders, but for the many. St. Francis instituted it for the sanctification of the faithful. The Rule of Pope Nicholas IV, to some extent, frustrated the purpose of the Order. He felt such demands (of the former Rule) could not be made on the faithful. For this reason, Pope Leo XIII ordered a mitigation. In doing this, a revival set in. A multitude of rigid regulations would not be in harmony with the Franciscan character. St. Francis was broad minded in the best sense of the word. It is true that the mitigated Rule lacks Franciscan fervor and unction, but it is characterized by Franciscan simplicity, moderation, and consideration. By this Rule, millions have reached a high degree of sanctity. It is the book of life, the hope of salvation, the marrow of the Gospel, the key to Paradise, and the bond of eternal alliance. A saintly American bishop wrote: "One of the greatest favors God can bestow on a layman is to fortify him by the Tertiary Rule and the counsels of the Third Order. He who observes the Tertiary Rule and strives to acquire the Franciscan spirit is sure of everlasting life."

The Rule of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis. In the very early years of the twentieth century, the Third Order found itself adapting slightly to changes instituted by Pope Leo XIII, but much remained untouched. Fourteen sections of the Rule basically prescribe the following:

1. Simplicity and modesty in dress.
2. Keeping away from dances and shows which savor of license and avoiding all forms of dissipation.
3. Temperance in eating and drinking.
4. Fasting and abstinence on particular days.
5. Monthly Confession and Holy Communion.
6. Praying daily one of three Offices approved by the Church.
7. Making a last will and testament.
8. Leading others by setting a good example.
9. Maintaining charity towards others.

10. Refraining from taking unnecessary oaths and using indecent language.
11. Attending Mass as often as possible and attending the monthly meetings.
12. Contributing to a common fund for the needs of poor members and for the dignity of worship.
13. Visiting sick members.
14. Praying for deceased members.

Some members of the Third Order of St. Francis include St. Louis IX (Patron of the Third Order) St. Elizabeth of Hungary (Patroness of the Third Order), Pope St. Pius X, Blessed Angela of Foligno, St. John Mary Vianney, St. Rose of Viterbo, St. Margaret of Cortona, St. Angela Merici, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Philip Neri, St. Camillus of Lellis, St. Jane Frances, St. Vincent de Paul, Pope Pius IX, Pope Leo XIII, Pope Benedict XV, Pope Pius XI, Pope Pius XII, Dante Alighieri, and Christopher Columbus.

Conditions for Entry

1. Candidates must be above the age of fourteen, in good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the Apostolic See. In these troubled times, this means adherence to the Traditional Roman Rite, avoidance of the Novus Ordo Rite, and acceptance of Pope Benedict XVI as the legitimate Roman Pontiff.

2. Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent, unless their confessor judges otherwise.

3. Candidates must undertake a one year novitiate before making their profession, in which they promise to observe the Rule for the rest of their lives.

Contact Information

The Third Order Secular members in Canada are under the direction of Fr. Freddy Mery of the Society of St. Pius X (S.S.P.X.), who has been delegated authority by a community of Capuchin Friars living in Morgon, France. If you are interested in becoming a member or if you would like more information about the Third Order Secular, please contact Tony La Rosa at (905) 951-8450 or via e-mail at tlarosa@rogers.com. You may also visit our website: <http://thetraditionalthirdorderofstfrancis.blogspot.com>.