



The Secular Franciscan Order ...friars offering accompaniment and assistance to men and women who have professed their lives as members of the Secular Franciscan Order, dedicated to living the vision and spirit of Francis of Assisi in their daily lives at the heart of the world.

Twenty-eight years after the Secular Franciscans have received their 'new' Rule, Seculars and Spiritual Assistants sometimes continue to use terminology and language that is no longer found in the Rule or used by higher authority. It is helpful for the smooth running of the Order that everyone be on the same page and use the same language or wording. If the Spiritual Assistants use the correct terminology

and vocabulary, it will reinforce not only the language but also the concept or idea behind the changes in wording. It might be helpful to consider once again some of these changes in vocabulary. The former Rule was the Leonine Rule, given by Pope Leo XIII. The present rule is the Pauline Rule given in 1978 by Pope Paul VI. The Third Order of St Francis is now called the Secular Order of St. Francis. This is what the documents from Rome call the Order; articles in *Osservatore Romano* refer to the Secular Order; and the Popes in addressing the Order use the same terminology. Using the word 'Secular' reinforces the notion that there is a difference between religious and secular life, that Seculars make promises and do not take vows, and their life and ministry is in the world. They also do not wear religious garb. Here in the United States the Tau Cross is their external sign of membership. When receiving the Tau Cross at their entrance into the candidate phase of their formation, we do not use the word habit. What was once called the postulancy and novitiate are now called the inquiry stage and the candidacy stage of formation. Profession or permanent commitment is made after 18 months of candidacy. Temporary profession is also a possibility, and sometimes encouraged, but not for more than three successive years. There is consequently no longer a Novice Master or Mistress, but rather a Formation Director. The Minister of the fraternity is not the Prefect, and the Spiritual Assistant is not the Spiritual Director. These 'new' terms help to explain the idea of fraternity and brother-hood/sisterhood. The Order is not divided into Provinces according to the First Order designations, but into Regions containing fraternities bonded to different First Order Provinces. There are also some words used today that are not official designations, but are helpful in understanding the concept or idea of fraternity more clearly. For instance, it is preferred that we say 'fraternity gatherings' rather than 'meetings' in order to reinforce that we gather, usually on a monthly basis, as a fraternity, to not only conduct business, but to pray, socialize and share as a fraternity. The fraternity gathering is not a prayer meeting, nor a business meeting. During the past thirty years we, as members of the Catholic Church, have changed much of our theological and liturgical vocabulary. The same is true of the Secular Franciscan Order. Sometimes it is necessary and useful to use 'old' terminology in order to make clear what we are speaking about. For instance, sometimes inquirers want to know if this is the real Third Order, or the same Order their parents belonged to, or some do not like the word 'secular' because of the similarity between the words secular and worldly. But if the whole Order is presently using this 'new' vocabulary, we should do the same, in order to avoid confusion and come to a better understanding of the nature of a secular Order.



many cultures/through Francis/in Christ

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