

CONSTITUTION OF THE FRANCISCANS OF RECONCILIATION Ecumenical Catholic Communion

MISSION

We, the Franciscans of Reconciliation of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, are called to respond to the words of our Lord spoken to Francis of Assisi to "rebuild my Church" by living out the Gospel in our everyday lives and following the example of our founder. In this we strive to be reconcilers with our brothers and sisters and with all of creation which has been misused through sin. With Franciscan joy we go forward to proclaim the Good News, using words only when necessary and asking the Lord, "Make us instruments of your peace."

PREAMBLE

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God, clergy and laity, who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Christ calls us to follow this way so that he may send us, like Francis, to offer all that we have and all that we are. We shall strive to be living witnesses among all nations to the great truth that in Christ "there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and freemen, between men and women" (Galatians 3:28); that there are no barriers of race or nations in God's family. There is only the All-loving Creator, the Divine Redeemer, the one fellowship in the All-Wonderful Comforter.

The Franciscans of Reconciliation are men or women, single or partnered in a committed relationship/married, ordained or laity in the Ecumenical Catholic Communion who feel called to a lifelong dedication under a definite discipline and vows. This Order is open to both those who are called to an ordered life in strict

conformity with the evangelical Counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience and those who are called to an observance of the spirit of these three Counsels in the ordinary professions of life. Both paths are in accord with the intentions of Father Francis when he lived with the gathered Friars and endorsed the life of the Sisters who followed Mother Clare, and when he encouraged the formation of a Third Order. Each community within the Order will determine which path is best suited to a specific corporate expression of the Franciscan spirit, and those who join us subsequently will be drawn to a community that expresses their specific vocation.

In all that we do within our communities, within our Order, within the Ecumenical Catholic Communion, within our union with all of those in Christ and all who seek unity under God, we strive to be instruments of God's peace and ministers of reconciliation among all people. To that end we adopt the Constitution that follows. We all subscribe to and affirm the rule of life contained in Chapter 2, which may be furthered amplified, but not abridged, by any community within the Order.

Article 1: Concerning This Order

Section 1

There are many spiritual families in the Church with different charisms. Among these families the Franciscans have a variety of expressions (*e.g.*, gathered intentional communities of men, gathered intentional communities of women, dispersed communities). All recognize St. Francis of Assisi as the father, inspiration, and model, of our distinctive expressions of a common charism. Any of these expressions are legitimate for any given community within the Franciscans of Reconciliation.(OFR).

Section 2

The vocation of the OFR gives form to the life and apostolic activity of its members. Therefore, those who are bound by a perpetual commitment to another religious family or institute of consecrated life cannot belong to the OFR.

Section 3

The OFR is open to the faithful of the Ecumenical Catholic Communion (ECC) in all orders of ministry (laity, deacons, presbyters, bishops) whether male or female, partnered/married or single, and with no distinctions based on sexual orientation. The only restrictions on membership are a willingness to subscribe to and live according to the rule and the attainment of the age of 21 years.

1. Any gathered intentional community may stipulate that membership is exclusive to either males or females in the single state, but no other restrictions may be imposed.

Section 4

Our apostolic vocation expresses itself for lay members as contributions to building up the Kingdom of God by their presence in their life-situations. For the clergy it is expressed through sacramental, proclamation and pastoral ministry to the people of God, in communion with the bishop and in conformity to the Synodal structure of the ECC. Both are inspired by the gospel options of Saint Francis of Assisi, committing us to continue his mission as part of the Franciscan Family.

Section 5

The OFR is governed by its own Rule, Constitutions (both for the Order as a whole and for each specific community), and Ritual, all of which must be in conformity with the Constitution, Canons and practices of the ECC.

1. The Constitution and Ritual of any given community must be in conformity with the controlling documents of both the ECC and the OFR. Community Constitutions and Rituals will be approved by a process outlined in the By-laws.

Article 2: The Rule

Section 1

We covenant together, as the Franciscans of Reconciliation, to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the Gospel, going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel.

Section 2

We seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in our brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity.

Section 3

We shall go forth as witnesses and instruments of the Church's mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by our life and words. Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, we shall devote ourselves energetically to living accountable to the Ecumenical Catholic Communion and in spiritual fellowship with Christians everywhere.

Section 4

Living within the Franciscan tradition, and motivated by the dynamic power of the Gospel, let us conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "Conversion". Human frailty calls us to strive for this conversion daily.

Section 5

Following the example of Jesus, let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all we are and do. Let us participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let us join in corporate prayer, even when apart through the Daily Office in one of the forms in use in the Church.

Section 6

The Franciscans of Reconciliation shall follow the example of Mary by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

Section 7

We shall faithfully fulfill the duties proper to our various circumstances of life. We shall also follow the poor and crucified Christ and witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.

Section 8

Christ chose for himself a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Franciscans of Reconciliation seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying our own material needs. Let us be mindful that according to the Gospel we are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. We shall strive to purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

Section 9

As members of the Franciscans of Reconciliation, with a gentle and courteous spirit, we accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ. A sense of community will make us joyful and ready to place ourselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom we shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

Section 10

We shall individually and collectively be in the forefront of promoting justice by testimony of our human lives and courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, we should make definite choices in harmony with our faith.

Section 11

We shall esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, reconciliation, redemption and service of the human community.

Section 12

In our families, we shall cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life; striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ.

Section 13

We shall respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High", and we shall strive to move from the temptation of exploiting Creation toward the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

Section 14

We joyfully accept the ministry of reconciliation as our special apostolate. In obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of Saint Francis, we are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly. We are compelled to seek out ways of resolving conflict through non-violent means, trusting in the presence of the divine soul in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.

Section 15

Since we are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let us accept death serenely as an encounter with our God.

Section 16

As members of the Franciscans of Reconciliation we covenant to draw up and live by a Personal Rule of Life based on the Rule of this Order and falling into these disciplines: Worship, Prayer, Penitence, Work, Lifestyle, Mission, Obedience, Community. We shall always be under supervision and accountable to an advisor.

Section 17

Admission into this Order is gradually attained through a time of orientation, a period of formation of at least two years, and profession of the Rule. The entire community is engaged in this process of growth and formation. Profession by its nature is a permanent commitment. This Order and its communities are self-governing bodies within the ECC whose members meet annually, and is governed by its professed members who shall elect officers and make rules as they see fit, in accordance with this Rule and in harmony with Jesus Christ.

Article 3: Governance of the OFR

Section 1

The Structure of the OFR is more flat than hierarchical. Those who hold titles do so at the request of the sisters and brothers who have covenanted together under the rule. Authority is exercised on behalf of the Order as a whole and in strict conformity with its constitution.

Section 3

Each community will meet for monthly Chapter. While there may be a business/administrative portion of each of these meetings, there must be time for sharing and reflection on our common spiritual journey. If any member wishes to

place specific items on the agenda, this should be done by so advising the Minister and Council in a timely manner as specified in the by-laws

Section 3

The full membership of the OFR will meet annually for the General Chapter. While there may be a business/administrative portion of each of these meetings, there must be time for sharing and reflection on our common spiritual journey. If any member wishes to place specific items on the agenda, this should be done by so advising the Minister General and General Council in a timely manner as specified in the by-laws

Section 4

The highest authority in the OFR is the OFR itself, as an expression of the Body of Christ and under the criterion of the Gospel. For the sake of good order we elect Ministers, Councils, Treasurers and Secretaries at the OFR and local community levels to act as stewards and not possessors of that authority. The terms of service for these offices shall be specified for the OFR and each of the communities in their respective By-laws. The OFR General Council consists of one member elected by each community. The number of members of the community Councils shall be specified in their respective by-laws. The Minister General, in consultation with the General Council, will appoint a Novice Master. The Novice Master may solicit the aid of associates in each community to help with programs of formation.

Section 5

The Minister General for the OFR is responsible for administering the policies of the OFR constitution and by-laws. The Minister General will act as spiritual leader within the context of an order that is by its very nature a community of pastoral concern. The Minister General shall prepare in writing a yearly report on the state of the order. Further duties of the Minister General are: to call, to preside at, and to direct the meetings of the order and General Council; to call every year a meeting of the General Chapter; to call every three years the elective chapter of the OFR; to represent the OFR in all its relations with ecclesiastical and civil authorities; to make, with the consent of the council, pastoral and fraternal visits to each community, at least once every three years; to put into effect those acts which the Constitutions refer to his or her competence.

Section 6

The Minister for each community is responsible for administering the policies of the community constitution and by-laws. The Minister will act as spiritual leard within the context of a community that is by its very nature one of pastoral concern. The Minister shall prepare in writing a yearly report on the state of the community and to distribute each report to the membership of the community and the General Council. The Minister shall convene monthly Chapter meetings. The Minister shall call every three years the elective chapter of the community. Each community may define additional duties in the by-laws.

Section 7

The Duties of the General Council are: to act as an advisory body to the Minister General, to act as a judicial body to resolve disputes, and to assist in the planning of annual OFR chapter. Additional duties may be defined in the by-laws.

Section 8

The Treasurer will manage the financial affairs of the OFR/community under the direction of the Minister and Council, and with ultimate responsibility to the OFR/Community. The Treasurer will prepare a report each year with observations about the economic well being of the OFR/community and an audit of all donations and expenditures.

Section 9

The Secretary shall keep and distribute accurate minutes of all transactions, motions and votes during business and administrative sessions of the OFR/chapter and General Council/Council meeting. The Secretary of a community shall also record all admissions and professions.

Section 10

The Minister General for the OFR and the Minister for each community shall be elected by a pure ecclesiastical ballot. The first ballot is a nominating ballot, and successive ballots are taken until consensus is reached. With the exception of the first ballot, each ballot will consist of all names receiving more than one vote on the previous ballot. The invocation of the Holy Spirit, the reading of a portion of scripture, and the singing of an appropriate hymn precedes each ballot. Because we have placed the matter in the hands of the Holy Spirit, formal and informal

campaigning is inappropriate. The balloting continues until we have consensus. Once an election has concluded, the assembly will offer a prayer to the Holy Spirit and sing the *Te Deum* in chant or metrical form.

Section 11

Treasurers, Secretaries, community members of the General Council, and members of community Councils will be elected in accordance with the respective by-laws.

Section 12

Terms of office shall be three years, and no more than two consecutive terms can be served by any individual. This restriction does not apply to members of the General Council, who are elected from each community. The Novice Master is not an elective office and serves at the pleasure of the Minister General.

Section 13

No one may hold more than one of the positions described in this article at any given time.

Section 14

If any office becomes vacant, the respective Council will appoint an interim who will serve until the next election.

Article 4: Chapter Meetings

Section 1

The Minister General or his/her designate will preside at meetings of the General Chapter. Ministers or designates will preside at meeting of the Council Chapters.

Section 2

Prior to each chapter meeting, the Minister General/Minister shall appoint a parliamentarian. The most recent edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be the norm, with the understanding that we will use this guide as an instrument of consensus development rather than partisan debate.

Article 5: Admission to the Order and Formation

Section 1

A request for admission to the Order is presented in writing by the aspirant to the Minister of a local community.

Section 2

Conditions for admission are: to profess the Catholic faith, to live in communion with the ECC, to be of good moral standing, to have attained the age of 21, and to show clear signs of a vocation.

Section 3

The Council of the community decides collegially on the request, gives a formal answer to the aspirant, and communicates this to the community.

Section 4

The rite of admission is performed according to the Ritual in use in each Community until the development of a Book of Rituals for the OFR. The act is to be registered and preserved in the records of the community.

Section 5

At the first General Chapter following the adoption of the Constitution, the Minister General, General Council, and Novice Master will present as an amendment to this Constitution a process of Formation in conformity with the summary in Article 2, Section 17 of this Constitution. Until that time, the process in place within each community will be continued.

Section 6

Participation in the gatherings of the local community is indispensable for initiation into community prayer and into community life.

Article 6: The Profession or Promise of Evangelical Life

Section 1

Having completed the time of initial formation, the candidate submits a written request to the Minister of the community to make his/her profession. After having consulted with the Novice Master and the Minister, the community Council decides votes by secret ballot on the admission to profession, gives its reply to the candidate, and informs the community.

Section 2

Profession is the solemn ecclesial act by which the candidate, remembering the call received from Christ, renews the baptismal promises and publicly affirms his or her personal commitment to live the Gospel in the world according to the example of Francis and following the Rule of the OFR.

Section 3

Profession incorporates the candidate into the Order and is by its nature a perpetual commitment. Perpetual profession, because of objective and specific pedagogical reasons, may be preceded by a temporary profession, renewable annually. The total time of temporary profession may not be longer than three years.

Section 4

Profession is accepted by the minister of the local community or by his or her delegate in the name of the Church and of the OFR. The rite is performed according to the Ritual in use in each Community until the development of a Book of Rituals for the OFR. The act is registered and preserved in the records of the community.

Section 5

Profession commits those professed to the community, and it also commits the community to be concerned with the human and religious well-being of the professed.

Article 7: Adoption, Implementation, and Amendment of this Constitution

Section 1

The process of adoption shall be conducted by an interim council consisting of one member chosen by each of the following communities: The Franciscans of Fort Lauderdale FL, San Damiano Church in Little Rock AR, and The Community of St. Francis in Chicago IL.

Section 2

This adoption of this Constitution will require a two-thirds majority vote of the Franciscans in each of the communities referenced in Article 6, Section 1.

Section 3

Assuming adoption of this Constitution prior to the October 2010 Synod of the ECC, the OFR will conduct its founding General Chapter the Tuesday before the Synod, at which time the Officers of the OFR will be elected and the communities will put forward the names of their representative to the General Council. If the Constitution is not adopted prior to the October 2010 Synod, the interim council will propose a date for the founding General Chapter once the Constitution has been adopted.

Section 4

A proposed amendment of any Article or Section of this Constitution may be brought forward by a member of any community. The proposal must be in writing and submitted to the General Council at least three months before the General Chapter.

Section 5

The General Council shall distribute the proposed amendment to all communities within the OFR at least two months before the General Council.

Section 6

The proposed amendment shall be placed on the agenda for the General Council and time will be allotted for discussion.

Section 7

A two-thirds vote of all Franciscans from the constituent communities in attendance is required for passage of the proposed amendment.

Article 8: Drafting of By-Laws**Section 1**

Upon the adoption of the Constitution and the formation of the General Council, that body shall be responsible for the drafting of By-Laws for amplification of procedures and policies in order to more fully implement the Constitution. The topics that must be considered are those mentioned in Article 1, Section 5.1 and Article 3, Sections 3, 4, and 7. Other topics may also be included.

Section 2

The General Council will make copies of the draft available to all communities at least three months prior to the first General Chapter following the adoption of this constitution, and the consideration of the draft will be placed on the agenda for that General Chapter.

RATIFIED ON THIS 26TH DAY OF OCTOBER IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND AND TEN IN ST. LOUIS, MO.

Fort Fort Lauderdale

Vincent A. Negro
Joseph C. Spina

For San Damiano

Fred Bell
Sal Ball
Ellen Pinner

For Community of St. Francis

Jaymie C. Surfo
Katie Kelly
Angela Gray

NOT PRESENT BUT ASSENTING

Fort Fort Lauderdale

RICHARD SMITH
JOHN PANNEZOTTI
Pete Sanchez

For San Damiano

For Community of St. Francis

Br. Francis Leo Canizares

