

JPIC supplement to Initial Formation - Inquiry
by Andrew Conradi, ofs (JPIC National Animator), 2016
Some ideas/points that could be included at the discretion of the formator

INITIAL FORMATION - INQUIRY

Chapter 7 “OFS History- Development of the OFS Rule”

The Franciscan Journey (Updated version 2010) by Lester Bach, OFM Cap.

Note 1: *Understanding JPIC* (UJPIC) can be found here:

<http://www.franciscanvoicecanada.com/> Click on “Understanding JPIC” at the foot of the page. [It is best to get it from this source as it will post the amendments quickly after they are made so you will get the latest updated version]

1.

FJ Chapter 7

UJPIC:

“3.5.7. In summary, the basis for our commitment to JPIC is the Bible; Catholic Social Teaching; Francis and the Franciscan Intellectual and Spiritual Traditions; the OFS Rule and General Constitution culminating in prayer and action.

4. SOME HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO JPIC IN THE OFS

The previous Rules

4.1.1. The Third Order movement began in the autumn of 1211, expanding during the spring of 1212 and enjoying a prodigious growth in both area and numbers over the next ten years. Francis offered his followers a Rule of evangelical life, giving the Tertiaries three precious documents: The First Letter to the Faithful Penitents (*Recensio Prior*, 1215, which was the first rule of the OFS and which is now included in the current Pauline Rule of the OFS (*Seraphicus Patriarca*, 1978, as the Prologue); the Second Letter to the Faithful Penitents (*Memoriale Propositi*, 1221). In 1289 the First Franciscan pope, Nicholas IV, wanted to recognize the Third Order of San Francis in an official way. He gave explicit approval to the Order of Penance, which had already been commended by many Popes, and reissued the *Memoriale Propositi*, the Rule of 1221 in a more juridic form. Those Penitent Franciscans who remained in their homes (marrying or not) and who held a professional, artisanal or other occupational post constituted the Secular Third Order (TOS), which since 1978 has been called the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS). [Some are now calling it the Order of Franciscan Seculars in English to bring it into line with the international usage of OFS in Latin, Italian, French & Spanish etc.]

4.1.1.a. This 1289 Rule, officially approved in the bull, *Supra Montem* (a *Regula Bullata* or rule sealed by the pope) clearly placed the Third Order under the First Order. This was not popular with the Franciscan laity at the time as it took away their autonomy, and diminished their secularity and equality with the First and Second Orders. In fact, we recognise today that robbing the lay Franciscan Order (Brothers and Sisters of Penance) of its proper identity, autonomy and true secularity resulted in it being unable to effectively carry out its mission and thereby fundamentally betrayed the charism of its origins. It became instead, with few exceptions, rather a fractured devotional and pious society bent on self-sanctification rather than an apostolic one engaged with the world and attempting to sanctify it. This rule remained in effect until 1883; from 1289 on, the Franciscan Penitents (Brothers and Sisters of Penance) became known as the Third Order of St Francis which later divided into the Third Order Regular (TOR) and the Third Order Secular (TOS).

4.1.2. Again the Rule of Leo XIII (1883) *Misericors Dei Filius* did not call Tertiaries (TOS) to apostolic activity but rather directed them to devotions and piety; the goal was self-sanctification. Bach (1999, 56) wrote that: “This Rule seemed to make the SFO too easily available to anyone. Leo XIII endowed it with indulgences and made it more of a devotional society than a movement of gospel living. It brought great numbers but seemed to weaken the Franciscan spirit.” However, TOS regional, national and international congresses were held. The International Franciscan Congress in Rome in October 1900 was attended by 17,000 Tertiaries and two factions emerged. One wished to preserve the Third Order’s character as an association for Christian perfection (i.e. piety) while another faction, in addition to that, also wanted to direct activity to social issues following the directive of the Pope. (This dichotomy can still be found to some extent today in some fraternities in spite of the Pauline Rule of 1978 as we continue the struggle to regain our original charism of secularity and sanctifying the world by our example).

4.1.3. Self-sanctification as the main goal changed under Pius X who allowed the tertiaries to become involved in social reform and civil or purely economic matters (*Tertium Franciscalium*, 1912) but only if such involvement were under the auspices of the local ordinary, otherwise it was prohibited. This had the effect of limiting what we would call JPIC activity to charity and good works rather than addressing the causes of injustice. However, the Third Order became, for a while beginning in 1942, in effect an auxiliary to *Catholic Action* whose patron saint was also Francis of

Assisi. (Wicks, 2011, 31) Again this was intended to be under the direction of the bishops.

4.1.4. Change was on the horizon and a foretaste was the publication in 1957 of the TOS constitutions by decree of the Sacred Congregation for Religious which stressed the secular nature of the tertiary's vocation - secular holiness, secular apostolate - and outlined a program for committed Christian living that was realistic and up to date, especially as regards witnessing and working for peace and social justice.

4.1.5. To summarise, although the Leonine rule did not encourage apostolic activity unless it were under control of the ordinary, we were warned in our General Constitutions of 1957 that: "In order not to develop into associations of a purely devotional character, the fraternities of the Third Order are encouraged to promote a particular work of the apostolate." (art 80) and "... in particular the work of *Catholic Action*." (art 81) In fact this had unintended consequences because the rise of *Catholic Action* coincided with a decline in numbers of the TOS although the measureable extent of the cause and effect is unknown.

4.1.6. Prior to 1978 there was no unified TOS and the fraternities were in fact strictly bound by obedience to whichever Franciscan branch provided them spiritual assistance. Thus each TOS fraternity was said to be "of OFM; or OFM (Conv); or OFM (Cap) or TOR Obedience". The fraternities had virtually no link with one another (except informally or through the congresses mentioned above) and were attached to a Friary of the First or Third Order Regular mainly due to the fact that each tertiary made his or her profession to the Friars, and not to the OFS local fraternity Minister as is the rule today. Remarkably some of the (anglophone) Canadian Third Order Provinces were included in the National North American Federation which was basically an organisation based in the USA with not surprisingly a limited interest in or understanding of Canada.

4.1.7. It was by virtue of the General Constitutions of 1957 art 121 that unity and the regaining of autonomy became possible. The emergence of JPIC as an important focus for the OFS went hand in hand with several things: the process of regaining the OFS's autonomy; the emergence of lay leadership within the OFS; the 1978 Rule; and unification and regionalisation and, of course, Vatican II.

The Pauline Rule of 1978 - OFS Autonomy, Unification & Regionalisation

4.2.1. The start of unification began in 1946 with an experimental Interobediential International Council. The first International Congress of Lay Leaders of the Franciscan Third Order was held in Rome in 1950 with 2,000 participants from 15 countries and seven linguistic areas. Many voiced the need for an updating of the Rule of Leo XIII. They were of the opinion that it lacked the evangelical (i.e. apostolic) impetus which should be at the roots of Franciscan legislation. In 1957 the Third Order was given new General Constitutions, with the aim of renewing the contents of the Rule and giving the Order a spiritual, social and apostolic orientation.

4.2.2. With the added impetus provided by Vatican II, the long and hard work on a new rule started in 1965. In 1966 this expanded to include the General Constitutions and the Ritual. Originally this was carried out with input from fraternities but (incredibly to us today) with no Third Order Secular members at the meetings of the Commission, only First Order and TOR! This was recognized as unacceptable and soon changed. In 1969 an International Interobediential Congress was held in Assisi with three commissions and five language groups resulting in 25 motions. This led to a reformed commission in 1972 which in 1974 proposed new basic texts from which emerged amended new texts which were sent to National Councils in 1975. From the feedback this led to formation of a new commission of five lay and two religious together with four experts from the fields of canon law, history, theology and Franciscan spirituality.

4.2.3. The eventual result was the Pauline rule of 1978, *Seraphicus Patriarca*. This rule was given to us by Paul VI, who was the first non-Franciscan pope after an uninterrupted series of nine. This rule was a radical reform as it ended obedienciality, restored autonomy and secularity, gave unity to the Third Order Secular, and renamed it the OFS. It brought about great change in the local fraternities giving rise to a new structure – local, regional, and national fraternities part of, and under, an international fraternity with its own Minister General.

4.2.4. The OFS was to become autonomous, united and secular; and self-animating with the support of the First Order and Third Order Regular but, in a manner specified in Article 26 of the Rule, and in the form of spiritual assistance and pastoral and fraternal visits. As a Public Association of the Faithful (the applicable nomenclature of the Code of Canon Law, 1983) it

enjoys the privilege of being assisted by the First Order and TOR rather than the Ordinary though remaining under the Ordinary's jurisdiction for apostolic activities in the Ordinary's diocese under CC.GG 101.2. The OFS is under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life for the internal life of the OFS and under the Pontifical Council for the Laity for its apostolic life in the world.

4.2.5. Since the local fraternities were no longer under the control of the First Order or TOR to which they had previously owed obedience, they were now under the control of their own new structure i.e. OFS regional fraternities. These in turn were under an OFS national fraternity which was under the International OFS fraternity headed by an OFS Minister General.

4.2.6. This meant that in some regions fraternities of former different obediences were now part of the same OFS Region i.e. unity was achieved. Full unity did not occur overnight and it was not until 2000 that the General Constitutions were finally approved by the Holy See. In 2002 the Italians held their first unitary elective chapter and later that year the first truly unified General Chapter of the International Fraternity took place. So the re-born OFS is still an infant!

4.2.7. Under the Pauline Rule the only direction provided by the First Order or TOR is Spiritual Direction. In all other aspects the fraternities were now expected to act on their own initiative. This was a shock to some Secular Franciscans who were used to being tightly directed in every aspect by the First Order or TOR. Now they were expected to think for themselves, take responsibility for themselves and animate themselves. Difficult for some, especially how to live the Rule, particularly Nos 14-19, and problematical for some as the emphasis changed from piety and devotions to apostolic activity. For others it was a challenge gladly accepted with reliance on the Holy Spirit. The change did not take place overnight and in fact is still continuing.

4.2.8. In time also a new Ritual (1985) and General Constitutions (2001) were approved.”

Questions for reflection:

1. Did you expect to join a pious devotional society?
3. How do you feel about sanctifying the world through being in the forefront (Rule 15)?

4. How did you react to reading **FJ p 57**: “We call on all Secular Franciscans to involve themselves in the areas of justice, peace and safeguarding creation.”? Are you involved? How?