

The Rule of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis

This Rule has the following content:

The Principles; The Constitution; The forms of Profession and Renewal.

It is to this Rule as well as to our Personal Rule of Life, that as Tertiaries we owe our allegiance.

The Principles. In the Third Order worldwide, it has now become the practice, under the title "**Community Obedience**", to read daily a section of the Principles, set within the two prayers specified, or within the Third Order Office, or within Morning or Evening Prayer. The full text for "Community Obedience" will now be found in the Manual at Page A-9 and following pages. Here, as part of the Third Order Rule, the Principles are printed without the daily divisions.

The Constitution, which relates to the Third Order worldwide, should be referred to by all Tertiaries from time to time. (Our own European Province Statutes, which are not a part of the Rule itself, also repay study and are printed in the Manual Page F-1 and following pages.)

The forms of Profession and Renewal. Throughout the world all Tertiaries use the forms printed here. The Orders of Service of the European Province, within which these forms are set for us, are printed in full in the Manual (Page B-1 and following pages).

The Rule of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis

(i) The Principles

(as set out by IPTOC 2005)

The basis of that which follows is the Rule of the Christa Seva Sangha at Poona. Its successor, the Christa Prema Seva Sangha, had as its English branch the Brotherhood of the Love of Christ, St. Ives, Huntingdonshire, and the latter, when it joined the Brotherhood of Saint Francis of Assisi, and so formed the Society of Saint Francis, transmitted the original Rule. This version was revised in August 2005. Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

The Object

Jesus said, 'Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.' John 12.24-26

In the example of his own sacrifice, Jesus reveals the secret of bearing fruit. In surrendering himself to death, he becomes the source of new life. Lifted from the earth on the cross, he draws all people to himself. Clinging to life causes life to decay; the life that is freely given is eternal.

Jesus calls those who would serve him to follow his example and choose for themselves the same path of renunciation and sacrifice. To those who hear and obey, he promises union with God.

The object of the Society of Saint Francis is to build a community of those who accept Christ as their Lord and

Master, and are dedicated to him in body and spirit. They surrender their lives to him and to the service of his people. The Third Order of the Society consists of those who, while following the ordinary professions of life, feel called to dedicate their lives under a definite discipline and vows. They may be female or male, married or single, ordained or lay.

When Saint Francis encouraged the formation of The Third Order he recognised that many are called to serve God in the spirit of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience in everyday life (rather than in a literal acceptance of these principles as in the vows of the Brothers and Sisters of the First and Second Orders). The Rule of The Third Order is intended to enable the duties and conditions of daily living to be carried out in this spirit.

The First Aim of the Order

To make our Lord known and loved everywhere.

The Order is founded on the conviction that Jesus Christ is the perfect revelation of God; that true life has been made available to us through his Incarnation and Ministry; by his Cross and Resurrection; and by the sending of his Holy Spirit. Our Order believes that it is the commission of the church to make the gospel known to all, and therefore accepts the duty of bringing others to know Christ, and of praying and working for the coming of the Kingdom of God. The primary aim for us as Tertiaries is therefore to make Christ known. This shapes our lives and attitudes to reflect the obedience of those whom our Lord chose to be with him and sent out as his witnesses. Like them, by word and example, we bear witness to Christ in our own immediate environment and pray and work for the fulfilment of his command to make disciples of all nations.

The Second Aim

To spread the spirit of love and harmony.

The Order sets out, in the name of Christ, to break down barriers between people and to seek equality for all. We accept as our second aim the spreading of a spirit of love and harmony among all people. We are pledged to fight against the ignorance, pride, and prejudice that breed injustice or partiality of any kind.

Members of The Third Order fight against all injustice in the name of Christ, in whom there can be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for in him all are one. Our chief object is to reflect that openness to all which was characteristic of Jesus. This can only be achieved in a spirit of chastity, which sees others as belonging to God and not as a means of self-fulfilment.

As Tertiaries, we are prepared not only to speak out for social justice and international peace, but to put these principles into practice in our own lives, cheerfully facing any scorn or persecution to which this may lead.

The Third Aim

To live simply.

The first Christians surrendered completely to our Lord and recklessly gave all that they had, offering the world a new vision of a society in which a fresh attitude was taken towards material possessions. This vision was renewed by Saint Francis when he chose Lady Poverty as his bride, desiring that all barriers set up by privilege based on wealth should be overcome by love. This is the inspiration for the third aim of the Society, to live simply.

Although we possess property and earn money to support ourselves and our families, we show ourselves true followers of Christ and of Saint Francis by our readiness to live simply and to share with others. We recognise that some of our members may be called to a literal following of Saint Francis in a life of extreme simplicity. All of us, however, accept that we avoid luxury and waste, and regard our possessions as being held in trust for God. Personal spending is limited to what is necessary for our health and well-being and that of our dependants. We aim to stay free from all attachment to wealth, keeping ourselves constantly aware of the poverty in the world and its claim on us. We are concerned more for the generosity that gives all, rather than for the value of poverty in itself. In this way we reflect in spirit the acceptance of Jesus' challenge to sell all, give to the poor, and follow him.

The Three Ways of Service

Tertiaries desire to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, whom we serve in the three ways of Prayer, Study, and Work. In the life of the Order as a whole these three ways must each find full and balanced expression, but it is not to be expected that all members devote themselves equally to each of them. Each individual's service will vary according to his or her abilities and circumstances, yet each individual member's Personal Rule of Life must include each of the three ways.

The First Way of Service

Prayer

Tertiaries seek to live in an atmosphere of praise and prayer. We aim to be constantly aware of God's presence, so that we may indeed pray without ceasing. Our ever-deepening devotion to the indwelling Christ is a source of

strength and joy. It is Christ's love that inspires us to service, and strengthens us for sacrifice.

The heart of our prayer is the Eucharist, in which we share with other Christians the renewal of our union with our Lord and Saviour in his sacrifice, remembering his death and receiving his spiritual food.

Tertiaries recognise the power of intercessory prayer for furthering the purposes of God's kingdom, and therefore seek a deepening fellowship with God in personal devotion, and constantly intercede for the needs of his church and his world. Those of us who have much time at our disposal give prayer a large part in our daily lives. Those of us with less time must not fail to see the importance of prayer and to guard the time we have allotted to it from interruption. Lastly, we are encouraged to avail ourselves of the sacrament of Reconciliation, through which the burden of past sin and failure is lifted and peace and hope restored.

The Second Way of Service

Study

'This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.' John 17.3

True knowledge is knowledge of God. Tertiaries therefore give priority to devotional study of scripture as one of the chief means of attaining that knowledge of God that leads to eternal life.

As well as the devotional study of Scripture, we all recognise our Christian responsibility to pursue other branches of study, both sacred and secular. In particular some of us accept the duty of contributing, through research and writing, to a better understanding of the church's mission in the world: the application of Christian principles to the use and distribution of wealth; questions concerning justice and peace; and of all other questions concerning the life of faith.

The Third Way of Service

Work

Jesus took on himself the form of a servant. He came not to be served, but to serve. He went about doing good: healing the sick, preaching good news to the poor, and binding up the broken hearted.

Tertiaries endeavour to serve others in active work. We try to find expression for each of the three aims of the Order in our lives, and whenever possible actively help others who are engaged in similar work. The chief form of service that we have to offer is to reflect the love of Christ, who, in his beauty and power, is the inspiration and joy of our lives.

The Three Notes of the Order

Humility, love, and joy are the three notes that mark the lives of Tertiaries. When these characteristics are evident throughout the Order, its work will be fruitful. Without them all that it attempts will be in vain.

The First Note

Humility

We always keep before us the example of Christ, who emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, and who, on the last night of his life, humbly washed his disciples' feet. We likewise seek to serve one another with humility.

Humility confesses that we have nothing that we have not received and admits the fact of our insufficiency and our dependence upon God. It is the basis of all Christian virtues. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux said, 'No spiritual house can stand for a moment except on the foundation of humility'. It is the first condition of a joyful life within any community.

The faults that we see in others are the subject of prayer rather than of criticism. We take care to cast out the beam from our own eye before offering to remove the speck from

another's. We are ready to accept the lowest place when asked, and to volunteer to take it. Nevertheless, when asked to undertake work of which we feel unworthy or incapable, we do not shrink from it on the grounds of humility, but confidently attempt it through the power that is made perfect in weakness.

The Second Note

Love

Jesus said, 'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.' (John 13.34-35) Love is the distinguishing feature of all true disciples of Christ who wish to dedicate themselves to him as his servants.

Therefore, we seek to love all those to whom we are bound by ties of family or friendship. Our love for them increases, as our love for Christ grows deeper. We have a special love and affection for members of the Third Order, praying for each other individually and seeking to grow in that love. We are on our guard against anything that might injure this love, and we seek reconciliation with those from whom we are estranged. We seek the same love for those with whom we have little natural affinity, for this kind of love is not a welling-up of emotion, but is a bond founded in our common union with Christ.

The Third Order is a Christian community whose members, though varied in race, education, and character, are bound into a living whole through the love we share in Christ. This unity of all who believe in him will become, as our Lord intended, a witness to the world of his divine mission. In our relationships with those outside the Order, we show the

same Christ-like love, and gladly give of ourselves, remembering that love is measured by sacrifice.

The Third Note

Joy

Tertiaries, rejoicing in the Lord always, show in our lives the grace and beauty of divine joy. We remember that we follow the Son of Man, who came eating and drinking, who loved the birds and the flowers, who blessed little children, who was a friend to tax collectors and sinners and who sat at the tables of both the rich and the poor. We delight in fun and laughter, rejoicing in God's world, its beauty and its living creatures, calling nothing common or unclean. We mix freely with all people, ready to bind up the broken-hearted and to bring joy into the lives of others. We carry within us an inner peace and happiness, which others may perceive, even if they do not know its source.

This joy is a divine gift, coming from union with God in Christ. It is still there even in times of darkness and difficulty, giving cheerful courage in the face of disappointment, and an inward serenity and confidence through sickness and suffering. Those who possess it can rejoice in weakness, insults, hardships, and persecutions for Christ's sake; for when we are weak, then we are strong.

The Three Notes

The humility, love, and joy, which mark the lives of Tertiaries, are all God-given graces. They can never be obtained by human effort. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of Christ is to work miracles through people who are willing to be emptied of self and to surrender to him. We then become channels of grace through whom his mighty work is done.

The Rule of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis

(ii) The Constitution

1. The Order

1.1.a The Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis (TSSF) is the revival within the Anglican Communion in the twentieth century of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance originally founded by Saint Francis.

1.1.b The Third Order places itself under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Saint Clare of Assisi, whose festivals are to be specially observed.

1.1.c The Rule of the Third Order is comprised of the Principles, the Constitution, and the form of Profession and Renewal of the Third Order.

i) The Principles are the agreed version of the Rule of the Christa Seva Sangha as set out in the 'Source Documents.'

ii) The Constitution defines the form and practice of the Third Order in response to the Principles.

iii) The form of Profession and Renewal is authorised by Interprovincial Chapter.

1.1d The Rule of the Third Order is the basis of our community life and is the expression of our heritage and vision in the Franciscan life.

1.1e The Principles, together with the Personal Rule of Life, are the focus of commitment and renewal for all Tertiaries.

1.2 The Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis is organised into Provinces.

1.3.a One of the Ministers Provincial shall be the Minister General of the Third Order. The Minister General shall appoint another Minister Provincial who shall serve as Assistant Minister General.

1.3.b The Minister General is the functional Head of the Third Order throughout the world, and its servant.

1.3.c It is the responsibility of the Minister General:

i) to ensure that the Constitution of the Third Order is observed.

ii) to assist in co-ordinating the interprovincial life of the Third Order.

iii) to act as Convenor for the other Ministers Provincial in all interprovincial matters of Third Order policy and practice.

iv) to ensure that Interprovincial Chapters are called in accordance with the Constitution.

1.3.d The Minister General may attend and may vote at any meeting of any Provincial Chapter.

1.3.e The Minister General shall be elected by the Interprovincial Third Order Chapter, and a new Minister Provincial will be elected as soon as possible by the Province affected.

1.3.f When the office of Minister General falls vacant between meetings of the Interprovincial Chapter there shall be a postal vote by the same electorate, that is; the Ministers Provincial, the Provincial Chaplains, and the third elected member of each Province. A Bishop Protector shall act as the returning officer for a postal vote.

i) The Minister General shall hold office initially for three years.

ii) The Minister General may hold office for one further term of three years.

1.4.a There shall be an Interprovincial Third Order Chapter to co-ordinate the activities of the Order throughout the world.

1.4.b Meetings of the Interprovincial Chapter shall be called by the Minister General either

i) at the request of any two Provinces, or

ii) in any event at intervals not exceeding six years.

1.4.c i) The Minister General shall preside at all meetings of the Interprovincial Chapter.

ii) Each Province shall be represented at the Interprovincial Chapter by the Minister Provincial, the Provincial Chaplain, or their nominees, and one other professed tertiary, chosen according to the procedure laid down in the Statutes of each Province.

1.4d The Ministers Provincial together shall act as an executive body of Interprovincial Chapter. Their decisions shall be reported to, and ratified by all Provincial Chapters and the Interprovincial Chapter when it meets.

1.4.e The Third Order shall have a Central Fund which shall be operated in accordance with the provisions of Appendix A.

2. Membership of the Order

2.1.a Tertiaries of the Society of Saint Francis will normally be communicant members of the Anglican Communion or of churches in communion with the See of Canterbury.

2.1.b Application for membership from communicant members of other churches may be referred to the Bishop Protector of the Province concerned, who shall exercise his discretion in accordance with the Constitution of the Society of Saint Francis.

2.2.a The Third Order recognises two degrees of Membership: Novices and Professed.

2.2.b i) The Novitiate is normally of two years duration.

ii) No person under the age of 18 years may be noviced except as provided in the Provincial Statutes of each Province.

iii) Postulants may be admitted to the Novitiate provided that they have kept a provisional rule of life for at least six months.

2.2.c At Profession tertiaries commit themselves to Christ within the Third Order with lifelong intention.

2.3.a Admissions to the Postulancy must be approved by the Provincial Chaplain

concerned except as provided by the Statutes of each Province.

2.3.b Those to be Professed must be elected to Profession by the Provincial Chapter of the Province concerned except as provided by the Statutes of each Province.

2.3.c Novicings, Professions and Renewals shall, wherever possible, take place within the Eucharist, using the Service approved for the purpose.

2.3.d Novicings and Renewals shall normally be accepted by a Professed Tertiary.

2.3.e Professions may normally be received by a Professed Tertiary after election by the Chapter of the Province concerned, and shall be evidenced by the giving and receiving of the Professional Cross.

2.4.a The resignation of a Professed Tertiary and release from the obligations of Profession requires the permission of the Chapter of the Province concerned.

2.4.b The Chapter of a Province may initiate the release from the Order of any professed Tertiary. This shall be done in accordance with the Statutes of the Province.

3. The Provinces

3.1 New Provinces shall be formed by the Interprovincial Chapter of the Third Order.

3.2 Within each Province the Third Order is protected by the Bishop Protector appointed by the Provincial Chapter of that Province for an initial term of six years, renewable at the discretion of that Chapter.

3.3.a In each Province there shall be a Chapter which shall be the legislative body for that Province.

3.3.b Each Province shall draw up its own Statutes governing its organisation and shall exchange copies for information with the other Provinces.

3.3.c The formation of a new Province shall be determined by the Provincial Ministers, and thereafter in accordance with the Statutes of the new Province as approved by its Chapter.

3.3d In discerning the will of God for the growth and development of the Order through the formation of a new Province, the Provincial Ministers shall take into account the following:

- Whether there is a functioning chapter
- The extent to which the emerging Province is taking responsibility for its finances. e.g. providing for its own internal needs and contributing to the budget of the existing Province.
- The extent to which it is taking responsibility for formation including indigenising the formation material and developing clear ways of doing formation themselves – (i.e. developing the material themselves and not just translating other material).
- Development of leadership and leadership structures.
- Recognising they are part of the wider Order.
- The justification for the change.
- Functioning structures and procedures that are being developed into its statutes.
- A minimum number that is viable.
- How this is of benefit to the whole Order.

4. Spiritual Direction and Rule of Life

4.1.a Each Member of the Third Order must have a Spiritual Director who normally has a Spiritual Director and accepts 'the Principles' as the basis of direction.

4.1.b Each Novice of the Third Order must have a Novice Counsellor who will assist with the Tertiary's formation in Franciscan life.

4.2.a Members of the Third Order shall each make and keep a Personal Rule of Life.

4.2.b The purpose of the Personal Rule of Life is to interpret and express the Principles in the particular circumstances of each Tertiary's life.

4.2.c The Personal Rule of Life should be drawn up according to the Statutes of the Province, giving consideration to each Tertiary's personal gifts and qualities as well as the other duties and responsibilities each may have.

4.2.d The Personal Rule of Life will normally include some commitment, clearly stated, in each of the following areas:

1. The Holy Eucharist
2. Penitence
3. Personal Prayer
4. Self Denial
5. Retreat
6. Study
7. Simplicity
8. Work
9. Obedience

4.3.a As a sign of their commitment and renewal, the members of the Third Order shall annually renew their pledge to live according to the Principles as expressed in their Personal Rule of Life.

4.3.b Annual renewal is required to safeguard against nominal membership and to give opportunity for the Personal Rule of Life to be revised if needed.

4.3.c Members of the Third Order shall report at least annually on their living in accordance with the Principles as expressed in their Personal Rule of Life in the manner laid down in the Statutes of their Province.

4.4 Those admitted to the Novitiate are committed as Members of the Franciscan Family within the Third Order, to

accept the authority of their Provincial Chapter and those who hold Pastoral Office in their Province, and to seek humbly and joyfully to grow in their vocation.

5. Amendments to Constitution

5.1 Amendment to the Constitution and Appendices may be proposed by a

Provincial Chapter and shall be submitted in writing to the Minister General for circulation to the other Provinces.

5.2 Subject to the approval of all the Provinces, such amendments shall be ratified by the Interprovincial Chapter of the Third Order.

5.3 This version of the Constitution is that amended by the Interprovincial Chapter of 2011.

Appendix A

The Central Fund of the Third Order

The Society of St Francis

OBJECTS

1. To enable Provincial representatives to attend Inter-Provincial meetings.
2. To pay the expenses of the Third Order Minister General when visiting the Third Order.
3. To pay the expenses of those commissioned to care for isolated Tertiaries at the discretion of the Trustees.
4. To make grants for other approved works which are in accordance with the general purposes of the Third Order.
5. When reserves are enough to meet the possible costs of Objects one to four, grants may be made to further the objects of the Society of St. Francis.

TRUSTEES

1. The Minister General, Third Order (Chair)
2. The Minister Provincial of the European Province if the Minister General is from another province. If the Minister General is from the European province, a Provincial Minister from another province will be elected by the Ministers Provincial.
3. The Bishop Protector of the European Province
4. The Treasurer of the European province with voice but no vote.

THE FUND

1. A statement of accounts of the Central Fund, with details of grants and income shall be sent annually to all Provincial Ministers.
2. Grants will be made with the approval of three Provincial Ministers.

INCOME

1. Donations from the Provinces of the Third Order.

2. Donations from groups or individuals, especially those who wish to see the Provinces of the Third Order go forward together in their Franciscan vocation.

3. Any monies received from Trusts, or any other legal entities, for the general purposes of the Third Order Central Fund.

SECRETARY AND TREASURER

1. The Third Order Central Fund shall have a Secretary, who shall also be its Treasurer.

2. The Secretary/Treasurer shall be a Tertiary from the European Province appointed by the Trustees on the recommendation of the Provincial Minister, European Province.

3. The Secretary/Treasurer shall:

(a) receive all donations to the Fund.

(b) keep an accounting record of the financial transactions of the Fund.

(c) ensure that a statement of accounts, with details of grants and income, are sent annually to all Provincial Ministers.

(d) refer applications for grants to the Provincial Ministers for their considerations.

(e) attend Trustee meetings

4. The financial year ends 31 May to conform to the European province accounting cycle.

The Rule of the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis

(iii) The Form of Profession and Renewal

(as set out by IPTOC 2005)

1.1 The Question:

The Officiant says

***Do you accept the Principles as the vision of
Community for the Third Order of the Society of
Saint Francis?***

The candidate replies

I do

1.2 The Pledge

I, N, give myself to our Lord Jesus Christ, to serve him for the rest of my life in company with my brothers and sisters in the Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis, seeking to spread the knowledge and love of Christ, to promote the spirit of love and harmony as the family of God and to live joyfully a life of simplicity and humble service after the example of Saint Francis.

1.3 The Personal Rule of Life

When the Personal Rule of Life is received the candidate says

I, N, undertake by God's grace to keep for one year my Personal Rule of Life (which I now place on the altar).

2 The Form of Renewal

2.1 The Pledge

I, N, renew my pledge to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in The Third Order of the Society of Saint Francis, according to the Principles of the Order, for the rest of my life; seeking to spread the spirit of love and harmony as the family of God and to live a life of

simplicity and humble service after the example of Saint Francis. I undertake by God's grace to keep for one year my Personal Rule of Life (which I now place on the altar).