

Order of Ecumenical Franciscans Statutes

Article I. Name

The name of the Order shall be The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans.

Article II. Mission Statement

Celebrating God's presence and grace in everything, following the Poor Christ of the gospels in lives of mutual care and accountability in harmony with the faith and practice of the whole Franciscan family, we are the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans. We seek to grow in the love and knowledge of God and to serve Jesus Christ in faithfulness to the spirit and example of Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi.

Article III. The General Rule of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans

Prelude

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 Sts. Francis and Clare of Assisi.

Christ calls us to follow this way so that he may send us, like Francis and Clare, 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 longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female" (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 Order of Ecumenical Franciscans consists of members of any Christian denomination clergy or lay, regardless of gender or marital status, who, though following the ordinary professions of life, feel called to a lifelong dedication under a definite discipline and vows. This is in accord with St. Francis's intention when he encouraged the formation of a Third Order, recognizing, as he did, that unlike Friars Minor and the Sisters who followed St. Clare, many of God's children are called to serve God not in a literal acceptance of the evangelical Counsels of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience, but in an observance of their spirit in the ordinary professions of life.

Principles

1. We covenant together, as the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans, to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saints Francis and Clare 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.
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.
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, let us devote

1 ourselves energetically to living accountable to our respective denominations
2 and in spiritual fellowship with Christians everywhere.

3 4. As the successors to the original "brothers and sisters of penance" (the
4 original name of the Third Order), and motivated by the dynamic power of the
5 gospel, let us conform our thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of
6 that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls "Conversion". Human
7 frailty calls us to strive for this conversion daily.

8 5. Following the example of Jesus, let prayer and contemplation be the soul of
9 all we are and do. Let us participate in the sacramental life of the Church,
10 above all the Eucharist. Let us join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms in
11 use in the Church.

12 6. The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans shall follow the example of Mary by
13 imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

41 14. In obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ and the example of Saints Francis and
42 Clare, we are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly. We are
43 compelled to seek out ways of resolving conflict through non-violent means,
44 trusting in the presence of the divine soul in everyone and in the transforming
45 power of love and pardon.

- 1 15. Since we are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true
2 meaning to Sister Death, let us accept death serenely as an encounter with
3 our God.
- 4 16. As members of the Order of Ecumenical Franciscans we covenant to draw up
5 and live by a Personal Rule of Life based on the Rule of this Order and falling
6 into these disciplines: Worship, Prayer, Penitence, Work, Lifestyle, Mission,
7 Obedience, Community. We shall always be under supervision and
8 accountable to an advisor, committed to a continual process of growth and
9 formation.

10 **Article IV. Chapter**

- 11 1. This Order is a self-governing body whose members meet annually, and is
12 governed by its professed members who shall elect officers and make rules as
13 they see fit, in accordance with these Principles and in harmony with Jesus
14 Christ.
- 15 2. Each year the Order comes together for a Chapter meeting which consists of the
16 following: the Order's business, community prayers and worship, study, sharing
17 of our lives, and the rites of passage
- 18 3. All elected servants of OEF, as defined in Article V, are installed at Chapter.
- 19 4. At each Chapter, reports from the servants are to be presented
- 20 5. Members of OEF shall renew personal rules of life and vows at Chapter. If
21 unable to attend Chapter, members should renew rules and vows within a
22 worship setting if at all possible.
- 23 6. Chapter minutes are to be mailed to each OEF member. Included in the mailing
24 will be the Treasurer's report.

25 **Article V. Servants**

- 26 1. Elected positions
- 27 a. Minister General
- 28 i. The Minister General is responsible for the life and well-being of
29 the Order, and is authorized to speak on behalf of the Order.
- 30 ii. The Minister General is responsible for the administration of the
31 Order, such as:
- 32 1. Preparation of the agenda for Chapter
- 33 2. Presiding at Chapter
- 34 3. Oversight of any legal obligations of the Order
- 35 4. Assuring the timely occasion of nominations and elections
- 36 iii. The Minister General will be responsible for representing OEF, or
37 will appoint someone to represent OEF whenever necessary at
38 various functions.
- 39 iv. The Minister General works in consultation with the servant team.
- 40 b. Chaplain

- i. The Chaplain is responsible for the pastoral oversight of the members of the Order.
 - ii. The Chaplain is responsible for organizing all worship services for Chapter and Convocation.
 - iii. Worship service formats will reflect the traditions of the communions represented by the membership of the Order.
 1. Any Professed Franciscan may serve as Eucharistic Celebrant and worship leader during OEF Chapters.
 2. Whenever possible, members of OEF will use inclusive language in their preparations and leadership of Chapter events.
 - iv. The Chaplain is responsible to communicate any changes in the status of professed members.
- c. Director of Formation Counseling
- i. The DFC is responsible for oversight of the formation journey of inquirers, postulants, novices toward profession.
 - ii. The DFC welcomes all inquiries and coordinates their introduction into the formation process, coordinating the work of the regional AFDCs.
 - iii. The DFC is responsible for the training of the Formation Counselors, for the materials used in formation counseling, and the symbols marking transitions to the postulancy, the novitiate, and profession.
 - iv. The DFC is responsible to communicate news of all transitions.
 - v. The DFC coordinates rites of passage services for postulants and novices.
- d. Treasurer
- i. The Treasurer is responsible for receiving, managing, and accounting for donations to the OEF.
 - ii. The Treasurer is responsible for distribution of all funds in consultation with the MG or Chaplain.
 - iii. The T will present a financial report at Chapter and servant team meetings.
 - iv. The T will assist the servant team in establishing an annual budget.
- e. Scribe
- i. The Scribe will take minutes and report the important details of each Chapter to the newsletter.
 - ii. The Scribe will take minutes at all servant's meetings.
 - iii. The Scribe will assist in communicating important issues in the life of the community as needed.

- 1 f. Election process
- 2 i. All professed members are eligible for nomination to elected
- 3 positions.
- 4 ii. All elected positions have three year terms. Elected servants may
- 5 serve no more than three consecutive terms for the same office.
- 6 iii. Election years will be staggered:
- 7 1. Year 1: Minister General (2003, 2006, etc.)
- 8 2. Year 2: Chaplain and Treasurer (2004, 2007, etc.)
- 9 3. Year 3: DFC and Scribe (2005, 2008, etc.)
- 10 iv. Elections take place at Chapter with the exception of the MG.
- 11 g. Election of the MG
- 12 i. The election MG is coordinated by an election committee
- 13 consisting of the Chaplain, the Scribe, and the Treasurer. In the
- 14 event that a member of the election committee is nominated for
- 15 MG and chooses to stand for election, a substitute will be
- 16 appointed to the committee by the servant team.
- 17 ii. The MG is elected by all the professed members by written ballot.
- 18 iii. The election is to be finalized by January 1 of the final year of the
- 19 current term, with the results to be announced by a special mailing
- 20 to the professed in January.

21 2. Appointed positions

- 22 a. The Newsletter editor is appointed by the Minister General and is
- 23 responsible for the publication of the newsletter four times per year.
- 24 b. The Fellowship Coordinator is appointed by the Minister General and
- 25 oversees the development of regional fellowship convocations.
- 26 c. The JPIC (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation) Animator is
- 27 appointed by the Minister General and is responsible for elevating the
- 28 awareness of justice and peace issues.
- 29 d. Assistant Directors of Formation Counseling are appointed by the Director
- 30 of Formation Counseling to assist in the formation process.
- 31 e. Assistant Chaplains are appointed by the Chaplain to assist in addressing
- 32 various spiritual needs of the community.
- 33 f. Other appointments may be made as necessary for the good of the
- 34 Order.

35 **Article VI. Membership**

- 36 1. The membership of the OEF consists of those have made vows as professed or
- 37 novices. Inquirers and postulants are welcomed to participate in the life of the
- 38 community as they explore their vocation with the OEF.
- 39 2. At every stage, members and postulants will:
- 40 a. Have an updated rule of life

- 1 b. Make regular contributions
- 2 c. Have a spiritual director
- 3 d. Be engaged in a local faith community
- 4 e. Exercise a discipline of prayer and biblical study/reflection
- 5 f. Regularly attend Chapter/Convocation gatherings.
- 6 3. Members of the community may identify themselves by:
 - 7 a. The wearing of the San Damiano neck cross, which is the designated
 - 8 "habit" of the community
 - 9 b. The use of the monogram "n/OEF" after one's name for novices, or "OEF"
 - 10 for professed. The monogram is used within the community, as well as in
 - 11 correspondence with other religious communities. Other usage should
 - 12 take into account particular denominational sensitivities and practices.
 - 13 c. The OEF does not embrace any particular religious habit. If one chooses
 - 14 to wear a habit, the motivations for its use should be carefully examined,
 - 15 and it should not be used until one has professed.
- 16 4. The journey into membership is as follows:
 - 17 a. Inquirer
 - 18 i. The dialogue between the ADFC and the Inquirer includes the use
 - 19 of the first three chapters of the formation materials and the
 - 20 General Rule and Principles, and explanation of the requirements
 - 21 of postulancy:
 - 22 1. Acquisition of a Spiritual Director
 - 23 2. Active church membership
 - 24 3. A draft of a personal rule of life
 - 25 4. Two letters of reference
 - 26 ii. Upon completing these requirements, one is welcomed into the
 - 27 postulancy and assigned a Formation Counselor.
 - 28 b. Postulant
 - 29 i. Postulancy is an initial period of formation as an exploration of
 - 30 membership in the OEF. Postulancy is a continuing period of
 - 31 formation lasting at least six months and includes monthly
 - 32 reporting to one's Formation Counselor on:
 - 33 1. the practice of one's rule of life
 - 34 2. reflection on a formation chapter
 - 35 3. the monthly visit with one's Spiritual Director
 - 36 ii. Upon recommendation of one's formation counselor and spiritual
 - 37 director, a postulant may be welcomed into the novitiate. The
 - 38 novicing may take place in the presence of any Franciscan
 - 39 community upon completion of all the requirements.
 - 40 c. Novice

- 1 i. The novitiate is the first stage of membership in the OEF. The
2 novitiate is a period of formation that may last from two to five
3 years and includes continued monthly reporting.
- 4 ii. The requirements to be completed before profession include:
 - 5 1. Discussion with one's FC about profession
 - 6 2. A written request for profession by the novice to the DFC
 - 7 3. A recommendation from the FC
 - 8 4. Written recommendation from the SD
 - 9 5. A letter of support from the spouse/partner
 - 10 6. Affirmation of a pattern of giving from the treasurer
 - 11 7. Meeting with the servant team.
- 12 iii. Upon completion of these requirements, the novice is presented to
13 the professed gathered in Chapter for a vote. Upon approval by
14 Chapter, the novice dedicates a Rule of Life upon the altar in at
15 the appropriate ceremony, and make lifetime vows to the Order.
- 16 d. Profession
 - 17 i. Profession by nature is a permanent commitment to the
18 community. Professed members are expected to continue in their
19 disciplines as outlined in (A) above.
 - 20 ii. Professed members will report to their Area Chaplain four times a
21 year: The Feast of St. Francis, Advent, Lent, and Pentecost.
22 Professed members are expected to be committed to service
23 within the community, such as election to a servant role, serving
24 as a formation counselor, or fulfilling other needs which may arise
25 within the Order.
- 26 5. Release from Vows
 - 27 a. Any Novice or Professed member who wishes to be released from vows
28 must consult with the Formation Counselor, the Director of Formation
29 Counselor, the Chaplain, and the Minister General.
 - 30 b. Novices may be released from vows by the Director of Formation
31 Counseling.
 - 32 c. Professed may be released by a vote of the professed members at the
33 next Chapter convened following their request.

34 **Article VII. Associates**

- 35 1. An Associate of the OEF is an individual who desires to affiliate with the
36 community, but is unable or unwilling to commit to the usual formation
37 process. Such individuals are invited to draft a rule of life suitable to their life
38 circumstances, based on the pattern of the rule of life for regular members.
- 39 2. Associates are invited to commit to pray for the Order on a regular basis, and
40 if possible, support the Order financially.

1 3. Associates will submit an annual report on their adherence to their rule to the
2 Fellowship Coordinator.

3 4. Associates who are so called may enter the regular formation process of the
4 Order. Upon so doing, their status changes from Associate to Postulant.

5 **Article VIII. Amending the Statues**

6 1. These statutes may be amended by a majority vote of the professed members
7 gathered in Chapter.

8 2. Any changes must be submitted in writing to the professed at least six months in
9 advance of the proposed vote, to allow for prayerful consideration of the
10 changes.