

Pax et Bonum!

Fraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Circular for the month of January
Year of Our Lord A.D. 2008

Most dear Brothers and Sisters of Canada and isolated members who in your charity have united spiritually to our family in our holy Father Francis, the Lord give you His peace!

It is with immense joy and gratitude to the Immaculate Heart of the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and our Seraphic Father Francis that we can indeed proclaim that here in Canada, we have an officially erected Fraternity of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis.

The more we have looked at what has become of this beautiful Order after the Second Vatican Council, and the creation of the SFO (secular Franciscan Order) as they now call it, the more thankful we are, that Almighty God has allowed us in His merciful Providence, to exist and to be used as little instruments in keeping alive this 'living flame' which is the Third Order of St. Francis.

That being said, let us then realize that though this is an inexpressible gift, it is also a calling to greatness and sanctity for all involved. It is crucial that we do not allow ourselves to become Franciscans in name and habit alone. We must know what we are. Brought into your grasp, into your very homes, my very dear Brothers and Sisters, is the religious life. The Angelic Doctor St. Thomas assures us that: "a religious is a soul who by his state, tends to the perfection of the love of God, or in other words, to the perfection of charity, by practicing the three evangelical counsels, poverty, chastity, and obedience."⁽¹⁾ The Tertiary then, must strive to take hold of this ideal that is the religious life, in the midst of his daily occupations. They must make this life and this ideal their own, else they risk forfeiting the grace of the Third Order. They must be convinced that upon entering the Third Order, the grace of the cloister, the peace and gift of the religious life, has been given them by God, and thus they must live this life in their own homes and daily lives taking full advantage of these unspeakable graces.

They are assured then, the grace to live in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, they have it in their very grasp. In the words of Lacordaire on the Third Order, "Religious life was thus brought into the very bosom of the family and to the nuptial couch. The world was full of young girls, widows, married people, all openly wearing the badge of a religious order and conforming to its customs in the privacy of their homes... Men no longer imagined that they must leave the world in order to rise to the imitation of the saints in their daily life; any room could become a cell, any house a Thebaid. The origin

of this Institute is one of the most beautiful things to be found in history. It has produced saints in every rank of life, from the throne to the cottage, and that in such abundance that the desert and the cloister might well be jealous." (2)

In a letter to one of her daughters, the very holy Madame Gabrielle Lefebvre, a Franciscan Tertiary and the mother of the Archbishop, stated, "How many souls- it is a large number- do not raise themselves above the mediocre, but are completely taken up with ordinary things, such as the many necessities of life, and not very spiritual affections. They no longer know how to reach God Who waits for them." (3) It is precisely this, the rising above the mediocre that we must strive for. It is, in the imitation of our holy Father Francis, the rising to sanctity even in the world, by living in the spirit of the evangelical counsels.

Therefore, dear Brothers and Sisters in name of the Lord, let us be united in charity so that we may inoculate this world so full of filth, with the Spirit of Christ. That we may return to the ways of the first Christians who loved one another, and through this love were known to those who were not yet Christians. It will be through charity that souls will be won. Love for God and love for souls will obtain for us a Catholic world and God Willing, the restoration of the Third Order of St. Francis.

In closing we may wish to reflect on the eleventh article from the first Rule of the Friars Minor, written by our Seraphic Father, as it is a lesson for us all:

Art. 11.—That the Brothers ought not to speak or detract, but ought to love one another.

And let all the brothers take care not to calumniate anyone, nor to contend in words; let them indeed study to maintain silence as far as God gives them grace. Let them also not dispute among themselves or with others, but let them be ready to answer with humility, saying: "we are unprofitable servants." And let them not be angry, for "whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." And let them love one another, as the Lord says: "This is My commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you." And let them show their love by the works they do for each other, according as the Apostle says: "let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." Let them "speak evil of no man," nor murmur, nor detract others, for it is written: "Whisperers and detractors are hateful to God." And let them be "gentle, showing all mildness toward all men." Let them not judge and not condemn, and, as the Lord says, let them not pay attention to the least sins of others, but rather let them recount their own in the bitterness of their soul. And let them "strive to enter by the narrow gate," for the Lord says: "How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it!" (4).

To the Brothers and Sisters of the Fraternity of the Immaculate Heart of Mary: Below are some counsels for our meetings and your everyday spiritual life. We ask that in your charity you please put to practice these requests and thus gain for yourselves the merit of holy obedience along with the graces attached to these pious practices.

1. During our monthly meetings of the Third Order, let the Brothers and Sisters not space themselves out and segregate themselves without necessity. Let them take up the first two or three pews on each side of the chapel and thus in a body united, prepare themselves for prayer.

2. Let the Brothers and Sisters, whenever they may assist at the holy and dread sacrifice of the Mass, or partake of the Sacred Body of the Lord, remember to commend to the Blessed Trinity, and bathe in the Precious Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the members of the Fraternity. May they also supplicate with prayers after the reception of the Heavenly Manna, the good Lord for the restoration of the Third Order of St. Francis of Assisi.

3. Let them study regularly the Holy Rule and Constitutions, taking heed of the words of St. Padre Pio to one of his Brother Friars: "At the judgment seat of God, our Constitutions and our lives will be compared with one another." (5).

This letter comes with the blessing of our Father Director the Rev. Father Freddy Mery and with great sentiments of fraternal charity and gratitude to my Brothers and Sisters for electing me Minister Prefect of our Fraternity. Though unworthy, know that I am always your servant in Our Lord, Our Lady and St. Francis, little Br. Pio-Francis.

Br. Pio - Francis

Minister Prefect Br. Pio- Francis

Freddy Mery

Father Director: Rev. Fr. Mery

Appendix and Resources:

1. Pg. 79. The Spirit of the Third Order of St. Francis by Rev. Fr. Peter Baptist, OFM.
2. Pg. 80-81 The Spirit of the Third Order of St. Francis by Rev. Fr. Peter Baptist. OFM.
3. The Life of Gabrielle Lefebvre. By Rev. Fr. Le Crom. Pg. 23.
4. First Rule of the Friars Minor: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/wosf/wosf06.htm>
5. Padre Pio the Wonder Worker. Pg. 136. By the Franciscan Friars of the Immaculate.