

MFH SFO - Secular Order Franciscans

The Secular Franciscan Order meets 3:00 o'clock the 2nd Sunday of each month at My Father's House. We have weekly formal meetings with a teaching, prayer and fellowship. We also offer two weekend retreats a year, one in the Spring and the Fall. Our activities are often connected with the many activities at My Father's House Retreat Center.

Jim Tibbetts is the Fraternity Minister and Theresa Root is the Formation Director for more information contact one of them. Otherwise come visit the meeting at 3:00 o'clock on the 2nd Sunday of the month.

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St. Francis of Assisi

Saint Francis of Assisi, born Giovanni di Pietro di Bernardone, informally named as Francesco, was an Italian Catholic friar, deacon and preacher. He founded the men's Order of Friars Minor, the women's Order of Saint Clare, the Third Order of Saint Francis and the Custody of the Holy Land. Francis is one of the most venerated religious figures in history.

- Born: 1181 · Assisi, Italy
- Died: Oct 03, 1226 · Assisi, Italy
- Compositions: Canticle of the Sun
- Founded: Franciscans Religious Order

Brief History of the Penitential and St. Francis

There a history of reform in the Church and the modern penitential way goes back to the New Testament Apostles and Old Testament prophets and patriarchs; it has been associated with the prophets and mystics, the Jewish-Christian Essenes and the early Christian Church Fathers. In the Patristic period of the Church Fathers, (100-500 A.D.) reform was meant for personal reform or the reform of individual members of the Church. A person can live a penitential lifestyle of the body and the soul no matter what Christian denomination that they belong to. The penitent movement is not a secular or political or egocentric or ethnocentric viewpoint or movement. It is a path of purification of the body (biochemical), and the soul (psychological) for the glory of God. Throughout history certain members and Saints of the Church preached about reform, repentance and purification of the body and soul, St. Francis of Assisi was one of them.

This penitent (or purification) movement has existed from antiquity and persisted through the ages from great teachers and religious leaders like Jesus and his mother Mary; to the simple penitents like St. Francis of Assisi or St. Francis of Paola. They drew upon the Natural Law of nature, the Divine Law of Scriptures and the experience of the Tradition of the Church. Today science is becoming part of that Tradition as it confirms Christian truths.

A misunderstanding about the penitent movement is that most people think it is only about monks or religious. In Chapter VII of the Rule of 1221, Francis of Assisi explicitly states that the friars may carry out any type of work to which they have been called or of which they have a particular skill: "The friars who have a trade should work at it, provided that it is no obstacle to their spiritual progress and can be practiced without scandal." This is true for all in community, carry out your job as a lay person, a penitent, a monk, a religious.

Let us look at the writings of St. Francis of Assisi to gain a deeper understanding of penance. Penance is connected to purification; in the biblical derivation: *shub* in Hebrew, *metanoia* in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, *Poenitentia* in the Vulgate. Fasting is a primary example of purification or penance in the Bible; a pure or kosher diet is another example of purification. Besides the physiological purification there is an interior attitude, a psychological one or moral one which turns man towards God, thus purification or penance works on both the body and the soul (psyche). In addition in the Franciscan sources the term penance indicates sometimes external works of corporal mortification and acts of mercy, could be added here.

St. Francis of Assisi is a good example to help understand penance. The sources tell us that the first followers of St. Francis "decided to observe with great fervor the rule of penance and evangelical perfection," since the Poverello indicated to them "the ways of penance by his own wonderful example." Francis demands that whoever wants to follow him must "offer himself naked to the arms of the Crucified." (2 Cel 194) The life of penance "consists in the tending toward God with all that we have and with all that we are." "To do penance means to let ourselves be led fully into the economy of salvation that God realized in creation, redemption and the perfection of man through Christ." At Vatican II in the document *Lumen Gentium* it states, "the Church, however, clasping sinners to her bosom, at once holy and always in need of purification, follows constantly the path of penance and renewal."

In the Ancient Rule of 1221 is the exhortation that the brothers and sisters of penance “have a religious, instructed in the word of God, exhort them and encourage them to preserve in their penance and in performing the works of mercy.” (c 73) In the Ancient Rule fasting was also emphasized and Francis did many fasts. Francis understood the fundamental importance of serving the Lord “with a pure heart and a pure mind.” (Adm 16:2) Francis read the Gospel and realized that only the pure of heart will see God. (Mt 5:8) “Let us, therefore, ‘love the Lord,’ exhorts our Seraphic Father, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind.” (2 Faithful 3:19)

Citing:

Omnibus of Sources (of St. Francis of Assisi, English translation), p. 37; critical text in DO, p. 383. Cited by Ronald M. Mrozinski, O.F.M.Conv., *Franciscan Prayer Life* (Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago, Ill, 1981). Fr. Lino Temperini, TOR, *Penitential Spirituality in the Franciscan Sources*. (Franciscan Publication, July 1983), citing: *Chronica XXIV Generalium*, in *Alalecta F 3* (1897) p 75. *ibid*, p. 74 & 23. Fr. Lino Temperini has a doctorate in theology (St. Thomas) and teaches in Rome. LG, 8. (Lumen Gentium, Vatican II documents)