



## Called to Follow Closely in the Footsteps of Christ Life in the Secular Franciscan Order

Sample

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If you have been a parishioner of St. Francis Solanus for long, chances are that you have met or spoken with a member of the Secular Franciscan Order at some point in time. In fact, our local Fraternity of the Order, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, currently has over 40 members. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, St. Francis of Assisi himself wrote the *Rule* for the Secular Franciscan Order – which used to be called the Third Order – for lay men and women and diocesan clergy who desired to follow his example of a closer walk with Christ. The Secular Franciscan Order is one of few canonically established orders, with its authority coming directly from the pope.

Two questions that members of the Secular Franciscan Order often hear are, “What does it mean to live by the *Rule* of St. Francis?” and “What led you to become a member of this Order?” When Catholics choose to follow the *Rule*, they are pledging themselves to live the Gospel as fully as possible. The spirit of this way of life is summed up in article 4 of the *Rule*: “The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.”

So what does this kind of life look like in practice? Rosanne Roy, O.F.S., the Minister of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity here in Quincy, describes what the daily life of a member of the Secular Franciscan Order is really all about.

“Basically it’s going from Gospel to life and life to Gospel,” Rosanne says. “Our commitment is to be people of prayer and penance. Our mission is to be leaven in the world – to be penitential people – which means we are reforming our lives and hopefully our communities. Another part of our role is to support the Church, and that doesn’t necessarily mean we give them all our money, but it means we try to be an effective Catholic witness in the world and live the Catholic values.”

As Rosanne tells us, the essence of the *Rule* is that members – who make a permanent profession to live the Gospel – are called to be the best possible Catholic Christians they can be. As part of a Fraternity, group members are considered family. And just as families gather regularly to check in and care for one another, the Fraternity meets monthly to grow spiritually through prayer and faith formation. Outside of the meetings, the members’ commitment to living the *Rule* becomes a part of their daily life. Members are asked to be a people of prayer, for example, praying the *Liturgy of the Hours* in the morning and evening.

In all things, members of the Secular Franciscan Order strive to make their lifestyle reflect the Gospel teachings.

“You make a commitment to living a life of simplicity within the station of life that you’ve been given,” Rosanne says. “It means trying to disassociate yourself from things and not going after all the material goods you can get. You look out for other people and you try to live in peace. Also, we are stewards of creation and we try not to waste. And being a really good Catholic is about 99 percent of it – not just showing up to Mass and going through the motions, but really immersing yourself in what you’re called to be. We try to follow the Gospel to the best of our ability and bring Christ to the world by our witness.”

Rosanne was herself brought to Christ through the witness of others. While Rosanne was not raised Catholic, she found that, as a young girl, she was drawn to her Catholic neighbor’s house and the special sense of peace there. Looking back, she knows that she had always sensed God’s presence in her life, even as a child. At age 14, she first experienced a true yearning to become Catholic, and when she was 30, she took a Knights of Columbus correspondence course. At the end of the study, she was instructed to choose a saint’s name. Not knowing any of the saints, Rosanne put a collection of saints’ names in a hat and chose one at random. The saint that she picked? St. Clare, who, with St. Francis, founded the Poor Clares, the Second Franciscan Order to be established.

Returning to Quincy following her conversion, Rosanne soon discovered that the area was a “hotbed of Franciscan life.” Like the random drawing of St. Clare’s name, Rosanne considers this discovery to be yet another instance of God putting her in the right place at the right time. The Holy Spirit inspired Rosanne to make her profession in the Secular Franciscan Order in 1982, and she is always pleased to see the Spirit working in others who come to inquire and learn more about this way of life.

“Vocations is one of those things,” she says. “If anyone has a stirring in their heart – maybe they heard about St. Francis and how free and happy he was, giving away his earthly burdens so he could praise and worship – whatever stirrings draw someone in is the first and best way. But it is also important to be a witness for people to see someone living this way. The Holy Spirit draws you to it. You come and immerse yourself in the life and let God have His way with you.”



Anyone who is interested in finding out more about life in the Secular Franciscan Order is welcome to attend one of the gatherings of the St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity, held in the St. Francis Solanus parish hall on the third Sunday of each month. Meetings begin with refreshments and social time at 12:30 p.m. and then follow with formation, group prayer, and a bit of business.

As Rosanne emphasizes, anyone is invited to attend a meeting, without any obligation – and you just never know where the Holy Spirit may end up taking you!

“Come to a gathering,” Rosanne says. “You are welcome to come and see, have a snack after church, and meet some pretty nice people. It may change your life!”

If you would like more information please visit St. Elizabeth of Hungary Fraternity’s website:

**<http://sites.google.com/site/stelizabethofsquincy>**

and the *Franciscans of the Prairie Regional* website: **[www.prairiestfrancis.org](http://www.prairiestfrancis.org)**

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