



# Prairie Fire News

Franciscans of the Prairie Regional Fraternity, O.F.S.

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Justice



Peace



Integrity of Creation



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## The Role of Secular Franciscans in Society

By D.R. Dowell ofS

As Secular Franciscans, we commit ourselves to live the Gospel according to Franciscan spirituality in our secular state. We are called to make our own contribution, inspired by the person and message of our Seraphic Father Francis, towards a world in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and peace and love may be living realities.

Let us give thanks to our God and Father, our brother and Redeemer, Jesus and the Spirit of Love for the holy charism that was poured forth by our Seraphic Father Francis.

*“Franciscans are social in nature. Franciscans live the Gospel in public, in the public sphere, not in individual privacy. The Incarnation was and is a social event. I repeat: a social event. It’s a big party! Let’s make it good! Our “evangelical life” orients us toward engaging society and its members. We care for everyone in society, and thus the common good has a prominent role in the Franciscan tradition. There is universality to our social vision, and we should be able to contribute something to the globalization of human culture today.*

*“Franciscans are action-oriented. For us, learning, study, and philosophy are, at least in part, derivative of a human social experience, of action, of serving, of loving. This too is rooted in the Incarnation: Christ’s embodied action.*

*“We practice a spirituality of social engagement, in dialogue with society, the needs of its members, especially the suffering and vulnerable. At our best, we Franciscans are creative, manifesting the creativity of God through our social innovation. This may be pastoral, practical, prophetic, or some combination of the above.*

*“Franciscans are not content with understanding alone. We want to express our understandings through love, through practical action.”*

~ Keith Douglass Warner, OFM

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### COMING REGIONAL EVENTS

**March 28—29, 2020**

Regional Fraternity & Executive Councils

**August 1, 2020**

Regional day of Reflection—Formation

**August 28—30, 2020**

Regional Retreat

Regional Fraternity & Executive Councils

### NATIONAL EVENTS

**August 18—22, 2021**

OFS-USA Quinquennial Congress  
(Phoenix, Arizona)

*The Role of Secular Franciscans in Society continued*

*The preceding article is taken from the Handbook for Animators of Justice, Peace, & Integrity of Creation*

I think that it is a good thing to remind ourselves every once in a while about what our role as Franciscans really is. It is so easy to let ourselves be lulled into being a prayer society with good social interaction and refreshments once a month. Fr. Warner’s comments really explain our role very well—the action part of our Profession. You see, when we Profess to follow the Rule, we are accepting the entire rule—and most of it involves our action in the world today—Gospel to Life—Life to Gospel. These words aren’t just a nice sounding motto. They require us to become involved in today’s society using whatever gifts we have to offer. When we look at Jesus’ and Francis’ examples, we notice that both of them spent their time with the poor, disadvantaged, those without resources, those who are marginalized in their society. *"It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* (Mark 2: 17) What this means for us today is that we should not be satisfied with sitting in a comfortable room reading prayers. We Franciscans are both contemplative **AND** active. We need to roll up our sleeves and help in whatever way we can those who are sick—physically, mentally, spiritually. Now, for all of our younger Professed this is not really a matter of capability, but one of time allocation. Many of our more mature Professed just don’t have the vitality of our younger years, so many of the corporal works of mercy are difficult to accomplish. Despite this physical limitation, we can still do the spiritual works of mercy: *To instruct the ignorant. To counsel the doubtful. To admonish the sinner. To bear wrongs patiently. To forgive offenses willingly. To comfort the afflicted. To pray for the living and the dead.* Many times all a person needs to offer is a warm smile and a comforting presence and a willingness to listen. We can do that even if we are confined to a wheel chair in a care center. Those who are confined to a bed, if they are mentally alert, can pray for the living and the dead. So, none of us can only spend our time reading *The Word Among Us* or just praying the many devotions available and consider our obligation complete. No matter where we are, at work, in school, in care centers, or confined to bed, we have an obligation to determine just how we can directly affect other people with our Franciscan witness and charism. More importantly, we should not be happy

*The ultimate test of your greatness is the way you treat every human being...*  
 ~ St. John Paul II

*From Daily Ray of Hope—Sierra Club*



Photo by Brad Frick, La Verne, CA | Vermilion Lakes in Banff National Park, Canada

*I am myself, and you are you.  
 Blessed be the day that we accept that.*

~ Muriel Strode

***Word for the Day—from Gratefulness.org***

*We have so much to learn from each other,  
and our connections run so much deeper and stronger than we think.*

*~Justine du Toit*

***The Role of Secular Franciscans in Society continued***

with our own individual effort in these areas—we should be emphatic about living and acting in Fraternity—working together with other Franciscans to reach for these goals. We ask “How can I join with others in my Fraternity to provide service in both the Corporal and Spiritual works of mercy?” Now, that could as simple as accompanying another Professed in a visit to a homebound person, or volunteering at the local food pantry as an entire Fraternity activity, or writing our local Congressman or state official about an important, pressing issue. The point is that we work together with others in our Fraternity and other Fraternities. The options are limited only by our imagination and willingness to push our comfort zone boundaries to reach out to the sick, or as Pope Francis reminds us, “to get the smell of the sheep.” I guess that the ultimate point is that we are more than our monthly Gatherings. As important as they are, they are really only half of what we professed when we sealed ourselves into the Franciscan Fraternity. Young people are looking for relevance. A strong, active Fraternity who is involved in community service, pastoral care, or prophetic wisdom will speak so much louder than pronouncements of good will and happiness. As Fr. Warner says, “*We practice a spirituality of social engagement, in dialogue with society, the needs of its members, especially the suffering and vulnerable. At our best, we Franciscans are creative, manifesting the creativity of God through our social innovation. This may be pastoral, practical, prophetic, or some combination of the above.*”

*Pace e bene, Dennis*

***VOTER SURPRESSION***

As we approach the primaries and general election in November, there is a distinct effort in many states to limit voting. These efforts include voter roll purges, racial and partisan gerrymandering, strict voter ID laws, and reducing the number of polling places. Those most likely to be adversely affected are young people, the elderly, poor people, and minorities.

- An estimated **19 million** people do not possess a driver’s license or a state issued ID. (*Carter-Ford Commission*)
- **7%** of Americans—about **23,000,000** people—mostly minorities, do not have citizenship documents available. (*The Brennan Center for Justice*)
- The turnout gaps between white and ethnic minority voters are far higher in states where people must show ID during or after voting. There is a **4.9%** gap between Latino and white voters in states that do not require an ID , but a **13.2%** gap for those that do. For African Americans the gap rises from **2.9%** to **5.4%** and among Asians the gap increases from **6.5%** to **11.5%**. (*Newsweek*)

From *This Nonviolent life—Daily Inspiration for your non-violent journey*

~Pace e Bene Nonviolent Service

*"For me the Voice of God, of Conscience, of Truth, or the Inner Voice or 'The Still Small Voice' mean one and the same. . . .*

*For me the Voice was more real than my own existence.*

*It has never failed me, or for that matter, anyone else.*

*And everyone who wills can hear the Voice.*

*It is within everyone.*

*But like everything else, it requires previous and definite preparation."*

—Mohandas Gandhi

### *Voter Suppression Continued*

- In 2012, on average, blacks had to wait in line twice as long as whites. Nationwide, whites who live in white neighborhoods had the shortest wait time—7 minutes. (*Mother Jones*)
- The Presidential Commission of Voter Integrity (2016) was abolished in 2018 having found no evidence of voter fraud. (*For more on Voting Rights, click [here.](#)*)

### *The Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching*

*The Church's social teaching is a rich treasure of wisdom about building a just society and living lives of holiness amidst the challenges of modern society. Modern Catholic social teaching has been articulated through a tradition of papal, conciliar, and episcopal documents. The depth and richness of this tradition can be understood best through a direct reading of these documents. In these brief reflections, we highlight several of the key themes that are at the heart of our Catholic social tradition.*

**3. Rights and Responsibilities:** The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. Therefore, every person has a fundamental right to life and a right to those things required for human decency. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities – to one another, to our families, and to the larger society.

### *Daily Catholic Wisdom*

~Steve Ray; *The Pain of the Crucifixion*

*Do you ever feel lonely, unloved, unforgiven, or unworthy?*

*Take a look at the cross. You are loved.*

*Jesus would have done it if you were the only person,  
because he loves you enough to make the supreme sacrifice.*