

Fr. Theodore A. Zaremba, OFM

The Popes Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XI consider the Third Order of St. Francis not only a true religious order but also a very important agency of social reform in the sense that they expect Tertiaries through the faithful observance of their rule of life, to accomplish that moral reformation of society which is an integral part of the complete papal program of social reform. For this purpose they encourage the hierarchy and all Franciscans to work for the propagation of the Third Order Secular and insist upon a more efficient organization of Tertiary forces.

“Franciscan Social Reform: A study of the Third Order Secular of St. Francis as a agency of social reform according to certain Papal documents,” Theodore A. Zaremba, OFM, 1947, 374.

Pope Leo XIII:

The goal of the Third [Secular Franciscan] Order is to preserve society from worldly corruption by sanctifying the ordinary and smallest actions of human life with the true spirit of Jesus Christ.... it [the Rule of the Third Order Secular] intends to cure the evils of society by an exact imitation of the Gospel.

[Theodore A. Zaremba OFM, Franciscan Social Reform, Pulaski: The Franciscan Printery 1947, 91.]

Pope John Paul II:

“The Church expects from the Secular Franciscan Order, a great service in the cause of the Kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unity on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as a community of love.”

“The Church expects from you, Secular Franciscans, a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God.”

(Message of the Holy Father, The Vatican, November 22, 2002)

Doug Clorey, SFO

1. What does the Church expect of the Secular Franciscan Order?

How can we render this "service"?

How can we be this "model"?

How can we be this "community of love"? How can we realize the "Kingdom of God"?

Doug Clorey, SFO Presidency Councilor, English (Europe and North America) August, 2003

Fr. Mario von Galli:

My feeling is that the Third, now the Secular Franciscan Order, could impact today as it did in the twelfth and thirteenth century if it has his courage and spirit and faith-inspired imagination.

Once upon a time it did have those qualities, and they enabled the SFO to become a world force in ways that astounded both rulers and ecclesiastical authorities.

It seems to me the expectations were not fulfilled because attention was focused all too exclusively on one's personal life and the moderate use of worldly goods, and all too little on concern for other people. I mean concern to appeal to the conscience of others by one's own example and one's candid criticism, even as Francis appealed to the conscience of the wolf of Gubio. Such conduct from a broad spectrum of lay people could represent a revolution today, even more than it did in the twelfth century.

"Living Our Future: Francis of Assisi and the Church of Tomorrow," Mario von Galli, S. J., 1972, 192-193.

Walter Dirks:

Too often the Third Order was taken for a closed order, a pious association. This concept is too narrow. I suppose that St. Francis himself cannot be blamed for it. The Third Order was meant to be a movement, even an historic power...

- It appears that Francis' mission found a real meaning in the Third Order. Its task is the sanctification of the world, penetrating the world with the Holy Spirit.

The First and the Second Orders exist only to enable the Third Order to develop fully. What is needed is not the renunciation of sexuality, money and power, but just the opposite: the meaningful use of money, reaching out into the whole world, exercising a positive influence on trade, politics, marriage, the building of the earthly city.

- Instead, the Third Order has become a "pious club." It is not what it was intended to be. Therefore, it too, is partly responsible for the world becoming so godless.

Adapted from ("Build With Living Stones," Lesson 1. Dirks, 1997, 171-181).

Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM:

As we have already mentioned, the Rule of 1978 was promulgated with the hope that the Order might gain a new impetus, and yet that hope has not, in general, been realized.

I suggest that... the Rule has not been adequately understood and the individual secular Franciscan fraternities have not been revitalized because the reality of conversion, and therefore the call of the Rule, has not been adequately understood.

The Secular Franciscan Order will gain a "new impetus" when the challenge of the primitive Rule becomes event again, when the radical conversion envisioned is lived individually and communally by the members such that the fraternities themselves become living sacraments, become so intense as to be almost able to be felt physically, become so obvious or easily observed as expressions of God's love and presence in the world.

"Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order ...", Fr. Robert Stewart, OFM, 1991, 363-364. [Adapted]

Fr. James Meyer

IN THE "Church of Tomorrow" the Lay Franciscan must live by apostolic action. However, this should not be the primary thrust of the Third Order; its primary emphasis should be the fostering of a *spiritual activity* which, by its nature, prompts and sustains *apostolic activity*.

(Fr. James Meyer, Report of the XVIth Triennial Convention of Sacred Heart Tertiary Province, at Saint Xavier College, Chicago, Franciscan Herald Press Chicago, Illinois 60609 June 21-24, 1973.)



Fr. Gerald Arbuckle, SM:

The action of re-founding is a co-operative effort in which prophetically imaginative and creative persons unite with... others to build a new, or to revitalize existing communities, under the inspiration and sustaining power of the Holy Spirit, through which Christ is brought anew to the world.

[Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Change, Grief and Renewal in the Church: A Spirituality for a New Era*, Westminster, MD: Christian Classics 1991, 6.]