

Third Order Secular Franciscan Formation for the Laity to begin in Warsaw, you are invited!

Our Community was established in 2011, and we have been busy planting many seeds these past years, through the Sacred Liturgy, JMI Summer Camps, pro-life work, parish missions and retreats, as well as many other activities. God has kept me and those who have worked with me very busy during this time, and now, it seems, it is time to grow and expand. It is with great joy that I have welcomed Candidate Justin Reineke on September 8th, and it seems it is also the **time to begin a Third Order Group for the laity**. This Third Order group is actually one of our FMI apostolates, and so I am very eager to begin and have discerned to begin where God has planted me—right here in the village of Warsaw. **Saint Francis himself developed a rule for the laity to follow in their growth in holiness and so from the very beginning has been a part of the Franciscan spirituality.** We know that there are many Saints who themselves or whose parents or family members were a part of a Third Order group, including Saint Louis IX, Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, Saint Philip Neri, Pope Saint Pius X and Pope Pius XII, as well as Saint Gianna's parents and Christopher Columbus. In recent times, the Church has again called the lay faithful to action in the pursuit of holiness to work with the clergy and the religious to evangelize the world. Saint John Paul II of recent and happy memory urged the laity to take their vocation to holiness seriously in his apostolic exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (On the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the World).



Saint Francis presenting Saint Clare with the Franciscan habit.

"It is ever more urgent that today all Christians take up again the way of Gospel renewal, welcoming in a spirit of generosity the invitation expressed by the apostle Peter "to be holy in all conduct" (1 Pt 1:15)... Men and women saints have always been the source and origin of renewal in the most difficult circumstances in the Church's history. Today we have the greatest need of saints whom we must assiduously beg God to raise up"(42). All of Christ's followers are invited and bound to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment of their own state of life"(44). (Pope Saint John Paul II)

So indeed this is an urgent call today, and using the plan that our father, Saint Francis, has laid out for us, we wish to begin The Secular Franciscan Formation Process as a FMI Apostolate. The purpose of the Third Order Secular Franciscans consists in the everyday practice of the Gospel precepts to serve as models of Christian life for others. Pope Pius XI describes it as **"the spirit of that life and perfection (of religious life and vows) carried into the family, into everyday life – the ordinary life of the world."** He goes on to say that that in contrast to religious life, the Third Order [Lay or Secular] is accommodated to the many." Through the Rule and way of life of the Lay Third Order millions have reached a high degree of sanctity. Saint Francis developed this way for the laity which is characterized by Franciscan simplicity, moderation, and consideration. The Rule given by Saint Francis would be studied first before it is embraced by promises, not vows, and would include things like: **simplicity and modesty in dress, monthly Confession and weekly, even daily, Holy Communion, leading others by setting a good example, maintaining charity towards others, and visiting sick members.**

The first stage of formation is the orientation process, which includes discernment and understanding, that is, if this third order would suit a particular individual. **Being a member of the FMI Third Order Laity is filled with many spiritual helps and blessings but takes a deep commitment to the monthly meetings and to seriously being formed in the Franciscan Spirituality.** If you are able, I invite you to 'Come and See', if this might be a way for you to pursue holiness and the perfect fulfillment in your state of life.

Our **first three meetings** have been set; they will be held on **Saturday mornings; October 10th, November 7th, and December 12th.** We will meet at Saint Gianna's Maternity Home in Warsaw. You are welcome to join us for the 8 am Mass in the chapel followed by coffee and rolls in the dining room (both optional). The official meeting and teaching will begin at 9:30 am. After the one hour class, we will have a Holy Hour during which confessions will be available. We will conclude by noon. **Please call or email to confirm your participation. (701) 248-3020 or fmi@fmifriars.com**

"Sanctify yourself and you will sanctify society." ~Saint Francis of Assisi