

== FRANCISCANS - WORLDWIDE - RENEW - VOWS ==

April 16 is a significant date for the thousands of Franciscans all over the world. Only three ways (Rules) of religious life existed in the time of St. Francis: the hermits (St. Basil), the monks (St. Benedict), and the secular priests (canons) with a Rule (St. Augustine). St. Francis introduced a fourth option.

APRIL 16 -- IS THE DATE WHEN ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI MADE HIS PROFESSION IN THE HANDS OF INNOCENT III IN 1209/1210, WITH A RULE OF LIFE TO LIVE THE GOSPEL, THAT INCLUDED THE IMITATION OF CHRIST IN PRAYER AND IN APOSTOLIC LIFE.

From that spring flowed the torrent of Gospel Living in the different Orders and groups of men and women, as well as thousands of lay people in the world, professing the same charism, founded through the centuries, inspired by the charism of the POVERELLO, the little poor man, Francis. This "family" includes Associates and other groups devoted to missions, local or foreign, that have been inspired by St. Francis, whose RULE OF LIFE was the first ever to mention foreign missions.

The historical event of 1209/1210 is celebrated according to the tradition and profession formula used by each Order or group: the members of the community renew their profession together to thank God for their Franciscan vocation, ask pardon for the sins against the observance of the Rule, and commit themselves again to the ideals of their life.

As a devotional rite, this is to be done in the privacy of the community, in a time and manner that the group will decide either with the Mass, in the Liturgy of the Hours or in a separate rite, and even on another date.

The Franciscans Sisters of the Sacred Heart, now 150 years strong, live this way of life. As we renew our profession, we commit ourselves to continuing the vision of Fr. Berger and the work done by the first Sisters and pray for the grace of perseverance. May the Lord give all members of the Franciscan family, and all our families and friends, peace.

1. Introduction (A hymn may be sung.)

Sisters, it has been a tradition in our Order that each year on April 16 - the day on which Francis made his profession into the hands of Pope Innocent III - we gather and renew our profession. The purpose of this renewal is to recall the origins of our Rule, to recall the devotion of Francis and his companions as they promised to follow the holy Gospel, to recall our own fervor as we began this way of life, and to resolve to commit ourselves again to these ideals.

Let us pray that, with the help of God and the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Francis and St. Clare, we may regain our initial fervor and re-commit ourselves to the life we have professed.

2. Praise

Ant. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord - in the presence of all God's people.

Psalm 116:10-17

How shall I repay the Lord *
for all the good things God has done for me?

I will lift up the cup of salvation * and call upon the name of the Lord.
I will fulfill my vows to the Lord* in the presence of all God's people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord* is the death of God's servants.
O Lord, I am your servant; *

I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds.
I will offer you the sacrifice of thanksgiving * and call upon the name of the Lord.

I will fulfill my vows to the Lord* in the presence of all God's people.
In the courts of the Lord's house, * in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Glory to the Father....

Ant. I will fulfill my vows to the Lord - in the presence of all God's people.

3. Readings

Phil 3:8-14

More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ⁹ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith¹⁰ to know him and the power of his resurrection and [the] sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity,^[b] but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ [Jesus]. ¹³ Brothers/Sisters, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus.

The Rule and Life of the Third Order: CHAPTER I: OUR IDENTITY

1. The form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity. Following Jesus Christ after the example of Blessed Francis, let them recognize that they are called to make greater efforts in their observance of the precepts and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let them deny themselves (cf. Mt 16:24) as each has promised God.

2. With all in the holy Catholic and apostolic Church who wish to serve God, the brothers and sisters of this Order are to persevere in true faith and penance. They wish to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility.

4. Renewal The Sisters petition for the grace of perseverance, for forgiveness of transgressions against the Rule and Life and their vows.

O Lord, Our God, we come before you mindful of our sins, but most aware of your mercy and overwhelming goodness. You so loved the world that when the time was right, you sent your only Son, born of Mary and the Holy Spirit, to live our life in its fullness.

When the world grew cold you sent another to walk most perfectly the way of your Son: our blessed father Francis. The poor man of Assisi left us for all times a gospel way of living that was confirmed by the holy Church.

This Rule is indeed Spirit and Life, the marrow of the Gospel. You have called us in love, each uniquely by name, into a fraternitas of love. We respond now in a renewed spirit to the call of the Gospel. We remember the covenant you established for ever in us.

Now, in your presence, and before the Blessed Virgin Mary, our father Francis, mother Clare and all the saints, we renew our resolve to follow the Rule and Life we have professed.

Loving and providential Father, Your overwhelming goodness impels me to respond to Your call to intensify my baptismal commitment by following Christ as a Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart.

Therefore, I, Sister N., in the presence of my Sisters, vow to You my God and my All, to live forever in chastity, poverty, and obedience according to the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and the Constitution of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

With my whole heart, give myself to this Religious Institute to seek perfect charity in the service of God and the Church. May the grace of the Holy Spirit, the help of Our Lady, the example of St. Francis, and the support of my Religious Institute sustain me so that I may live these holy vows faithfully. Amen.

(OR this formula for the Renewal of Vows)

Eternal and loving God, wishing to renew my consecration to your service as a Franciscan Sister of the Sacred Heart, i, Sister., renew the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, I made to you, my God and my All, according to the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and the Constitution of the Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

With my whole heart I renew the gift of myself to this Religious Institute to seek perfect charity in the service of God and His Church.

5. Intercessions

As we renew our commitment to follow Francis, we pray: **My God and my all!**

Lord, forgive our transgressions against the Rule and Life and our vows;

— help us to forgive ourselves and one another.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace;

— help us to establish your kingdom of peace in the world.

May our lives of faith, good works and prayer,

— attract many to the house of the Lord.

Save us from living in the past and resting on the works of others;

— give us new life and enthusiastic trust in your guidance.

Lord, grant peace to all those Sisters who have gone before us;

— may they find rest in your presence.

Our Father...

Closing Prayer

Father, you helped St Francis to reflect the image of Christ through a life of poverty and humility. May we follow your Son by walking in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi, and by imitating his joyful love. Grant this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

6. Concluding Rite

The youngest may bless the assembly with holy water and words of Francis.

Whoever shall observe these things with the blessing of the most high Father, and may he be filled on earth with the blessing of his beloved Son, together with the Holy Spirit, the Consoler, and all the powers of heaven and all the saints.

And I, brother Francis, your worthless servant, as far as I am able, approve this most holy blessing both internally and externally. - Amen.

(The Sisters exchange some sign of peace.)