

THE SERVITE SECULAR ORDER

A Secular Order is a group of the faithful who, working in the society, try to live the spirituality of a religious Order and the teachings of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Catholic Church, guided by the friars who belong to the "first order" or "conventual order."

These secular fraternities are known as "Third Order". The third Order of the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Augustinians, the Carmelites and of the Servites popularly known to the people.

The Secular Order of the Servants of Mary is composed of men and women who live their Christian faith in the society according to the specific spirit of the Order of Servants of Mary.

The essential elements of their spirituality are clearly expressed in the Rule of Life, compiled according to the orientations of the Church, above all as the second Vatican Council says about the active presence of the laity in the Church. On the 29th of April 1995, the Holy See approved the new Rule of life.



- I. History II. Diffusion III. Characteristics IV. Other characteristics V. Activities

I. History

Right from the origins of the Order of the Servants of Mary (1233), there were people and married couples who desired to share the spirituality of the order. Some laymen were accepted in the priories as "oblates", according to the Benedictine habit to accept some laymen in their monasteries. The majority of those people, who shared the Spirit of the Servants of Mary, remained in their own environment, carrying out their own work, family duties and fulfilling social obligations of their time. In the year 1424, the Pope Martin V with the *Bull "Sedis apostolicae providentia"* officially recognized the Secular Order of the Servants of Mary. Following the principles established by the Pope, all the men and women who were living the spirituality of the mendicant orders (Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Carmelites and Servites) became "Third Order", each receiving a specific rule of life. Since then, up to a few years ago, the name "Third Order" was most commonly used to designate the groups of people who were tied up to the order of the Servants of Mary and the other mendicant orders, even though some of these groups were called "Consortia".



From the end of the sixteenth century, the third Order of the Servants of Mary was supported and vigorously animated by the Prior General of the Order. Since then the Prior General played an important role for canonical approval, animation of the secular fraternities that came up in our parishes and in diocesan environments in which the figure of Mary and the mystery of her Sorrows are contemplated by the group of these people.

The present Rule of Life of the Secular Order of the Servants of Mary, prepared according to the directives of the second Vatican council and the principles of the new Constitutions of the Order of the Servants of Mary was approved by the Apostolic See in 1987. And after a series of revisions of the text, it was approved by the Holy See on the 29th of April 1995.

II. Diffusion

Currently the Secular Order of the Servants of Mary is present in various continents. The last estimation (1997) made in collaboration with the organism that promotes the communion among the Servite Family (UNIFAS), gives us the statistical report as follows:

There is a total of 280 Fraternities internationally and there are some 9,000 Secular Servites. The distribution is as follows:

Ø EUROPE:	128 Fraternities
o Italy:	111 Fraternities
o Spain:	4 Fraternities
o France:	1 Fraternity
o Austria:	1 Fraternity
o Belgium:	1 Fraternity
o England:	6 Fraternities
o Scotland:	1 Fraternity
o Ireland:	7 Fraternities
o Hungary:	5 Fraternities
Ø AMERICAS:	103 Fraternities
o Canada	7 Fraternities
o USA	26 Fraternities
o Mexico	55 Fraternities
o Colombia	4 Fraternities
o Perú	1 Fraternity
o Bolivia	4 Fraternities
o Chile	14 Fraternities
o Argentina	2 Fraternities
o Brazil	3 Fraternities
Ø ASIA:	16 Fraternities
o India	3 Fraternities
o Philippines	13 Fraternities
Ø AUSTRALIA:	3 Fraternities
Ø AFRICA:	30 Fraternities
o Uganda	20 Fraternities
o Mozambique	5 Fraternities
o Swaziland	1 Fraternity
o South Africa	4 Fraternities



III. Characteristics

There are three fundamental elements of the spirituality of the Secular Servites:

- 1) Marian inspiration;
- 2) Fraternal life;
- 3) Charitable Service.

1. Marian Inspiration:

The most important qualification to be a Secular Servite is his/her constant inspiration toward Mary who leads us for our salvation.



The Secular Servites venerate Mary as *Virgin* in the annunciation; as *Mother* of the Messiah, in the Nativity of Jesus; as *one who introduces Christ the Saviour* in the wedding at Canaan, as partaker of our sufferings at the foot of the Cross; as *bride of the Spirit* at Pentecost.

Attentive to the Word of God, the Secular Servites deepen their own vocation in the Christian community and in the society. As members of the Church, they commit themselves to know the Church teachings and to put them into practice.

2. Fraternal life

Imitating the first community of the apostles, the Secular Servites live with one mind and one heart. Some important elements of our secular fraternities are: Inner search for God day after day, union of mind and heart, docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. The 'Legenda de origin,' the fundamental text on the origins of the Order of the Servants of Mary, underlines this typical characteristic of the Order, introducing the seven holy fathers as brothers who were united in the name of the Lord. The Servants of Mary are called to be witnesses of unity and reconciliation in a world broken up by hatred and ill feelings.

3. Charitable Service

As God's merciful kindness extends to all the people in need and to all the creatures, Mary too is always attentive to the needs of the poor and humble. In the same way, the secular Servites are also called to be with Mary at the foot of those countless crosses where the Son of Man is still being crucified, in order to bring comfort and redemptive cooperation. Like Mary, the secular Servites want to bring comfort to the people who suffer. Imitating Mary, the secular servites, in their surrender to an ever greater love, want to take up their cross each day. Although creation still groans in sorrow and anguish, they recognize that they are bearers of those forces which free creation from the slavery of corruption and bring it into the freedom of the children of God. (Cfr. Constitutions OSM, art.319). Following the example of some great figures of the Order, the secular servites, together with other members of the servite family, have recently committed themselves in their service to abandoned children, defenseless young people, the prisoners, refugees, victims of injustice, emigrants, Aids patients, etc. For the people suffering in Kosovo, in Mozambique and in other parts of the world, the various groups of the Secular Servites have rendered a lot of services to them in their difficulties.

IV. Other characteristics

a. In the Secular Fraternity

On the whole the Servite Secular Order is a school of fraternity, spirituality, and religious theological and liturgical culture.

In the periodic meetings of the fraternities, humanitarian, social, Marian, biblical and ecclesiastical themes are discussed. Secular fraternity tries to interpret the events of today's society and the Church in the light of the gospel.

The series of lectures and spiritual retreats organized according to the need of the secular fraternity at the regional or province level, help each secular servite discover the mystery of Christ. Secular fraternity is in deep communion with the friars, the cloistered nuns, the religious sister, the members of the institutes of consecrated life, and their animator. Taking part in the liturgical services of the nearby servite priories, the secular fraternity grows in its spirituality. For the secular servites who are not able to take part in the common meetings of the fraternity, the council of that particular

fraternity will try to offer some other opportunities that would offer them the possibilities to strengthen their relationship with the fraternity.

The Secular fraternities establish relationships of communion and collaboration with the other groups of the servite family such as Secular Servite Deacons, friends of Servites, Servite youth groups and fraternities of Our Lady of Sorrows, etc.

b. In the local and universal Church

The secular servites try to live an austere way of life in the world, avoiding the excesses of wealth and properties. Above all they avoid the way of life that would cause inequality among the rich and the poor in the society. As far as possible the secular fraternities take initiatives to share their good with the people who are really in utter need. Following the example of the Seven holy fathers, the secular Servites regularly participate in the sacrament of reconciliation, and voluntarily engage themselves in penitential activities. Trying to be charitable they grow in humility in order that they may be strengthened by the Lord and be reconciled with the heavenly Father and with their brothers and sisters.

The Secular servites feel that they are called to radiate the love of Christ in their family, in the places where they work and in the society in which they live, sharing the anxieties, the aspirations of the society and the of Church and constructing a new world in the light of the evangelical values.

According to the indications of the Rule of Life (nn. 37 - 43), the secular servites collaborate with the local Church by actively participating in the Eucharistic celebrations, organizing special liturgical celebrations, teaching catechism and doing charitable services.



V. Activities

The Secular Order participates and collaborates in the pastoral activities of the nearby religious or parish community. Some groups render their service to the sick, the elderly, the emigrants and the prisoners. Some others work for promotion of social justice and to defend human life. In Europe and in America, there are groups that help various missions especially those missions that are undertaken by the Servite Order.

The members of the secular fraternities are always available to render their service in difficult social situations especially to single unmarried mothers, young people who are in need of economical support for their professional or technical training and etc.

Applying the servite spirituality, all the secular fraternities try to offer their service to their neighbours who are in need; it is Mary, the handmaid of the Lord, who inspires them to offer such services.

Marian cult toward our Lady of Sorrows is the fundamental inspiration of service for the fraternities founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and also for those fraternities founded in the first half the twentieth century. The memory of Mary at foot of the Cross is celebrated on the fifth Friday of Lent, whereas the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows is celebrated on 15th September; the secular servites celebrate these two feasts with fitting solemnity and joy in their respective fraternities.

The Solemnity of Our Lady of Sorrows (15th September) is considered by the whole family of the Servite Order the principal celebration of the year as our Lady of Sorrows is the principal patroness of the Order.

Segretario generale per l'Ordine Secolare e i Gruppi laici:

Souriraj M. Arulananda Samy

Tel. (+39) 06 699 30. 237

E-mail: osmsecular@aol.com, asouriosm@gmail.com

SOSM National Assistant OSS

Fr. Vidal M. Martinez, osm

Our Lady of Sorrows Priory

3121, West Jackson Blvd.

CHICAGO, IL 60612-2729 U.S.A.

*Tel. (+1) *773. 638 58 20*

*Fax (+1) *773. 638 30 36*

E-mail: osmvidal@aol.com

Prieur National OSS

Martin M. McNicoll

3877, Rang St-Elzéar Est

LAVAL, Qc, H7E 4P2 Canada

*Tel. (+1) *450. 664 3172*

Cell. (+1) 514 993 3773

E-mail: martinmcnicoll@yahoo.ca

National Prioress OSSM Philippines OSS

146-D Magallanes Street,

Brgy. Tunasan, Tunasan

1773 **MUNTINLUPA** City

Metro Manila Philippines

*Tel. (+63) *2. 861 3098*

*Fax (+63) *2. 861 7534*