



FRANCISCAN MISSIONARIES OF JESUS CRUCIFIED

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Dear Inquirer,

Thank you for your inquiry about a vocation as a Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus Crucified. Before I share with you about our community, allow me to first share a little about the vocation of a Secular Institute.

“A Secular Institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the faithful, living in this world, strive for the perfection of charity and endeavor to work for the sanctification of the world from within.” (*Code of Canon Law, 1983*) A vocation to a Secular Institute is open to single lay women or men or diocesan clerics who feel called by the Holy Spirit to consecrate their lives to God more intensely through vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. Members of Secular Institutes witness to Christ and spread the Good News of the gospel by striving to live as a transforming presence, or “leaven,” in society, striving to restore all things in Christ while living in their own residence and engaging in the employment of their choice. Hence, our entire lifestyle of prayer, work and social activities becomes our apostolate.

Members of Secular Institutes live their daily lives within the world. Exteriorly, we appear no different from others. Interiorly, we are consecrated to God and dedicated to the service of others. Consecration, secularity and apostolate are the main characteristics of Secular Institutes.

We are not Religious who live in community together. Members live in their own residence, wherever that may be, dress in attire similar to their colleagues and work in or are retired from various positions of employment or are on disability or have other means of financial income. As individuals we provide for our own retirement and health needs.

Now a little about our community, Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus Crucified:

We are lay women and men, many of whom have disabilities, who live a consecrated life in

the world, in the manner of a secular institute. We follow a Franciscan spirituality and were established in 1987 here in the Albany Diocese to provide an opportunity for women with physical disabilities to profess the evangelical counsels in an ecclesial community and to join with others similarly consecrated for the pursuit of holiness, the service of the Church and the apostolate of service to those who suffer in any way. We presently have canonical status as an Association of the Faithful and are pursuing canonical status as a Secular Institute of Pontifical Right. Until such time as this is granted, we are growing and developing under the guidance and direction of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

A Franciscan Missionary of Jesus Crucified must be willing to give their life completely to Jesus for the service of the Church and the salvation of souls--just as He gave His life for them. The vowed life is a serious commitment and can only be lived by those to whom God gives the grace of vocation. The Institute is not the 3rd Order Franciscans, nor is it a club or a pious society that one chooses to join; it is a life of total consecration to God for the service of others. Only women and men called by God and strengthened by His grace can live such a life in the world.

We have come to realize that, not only can persons with disabilities live lives of total dedication in the Church, but in fact many are called to such a life of dedication and service. We believe that God calls us to serve Him and His Church because of and through our illnesses and handicaps, not in spite of them. What others see as imperfections and hindrances, we consider as gifts and signs of a special vocation.

Many, but not all, of our 22 Missionaries have a variety of disabilities including visual and hearing impairments, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, depression, heart disease, muscular dystrophy and diabetes. Our members come from all walks of life and all levels of education. In age we currently range from 30's to 80's. We have a strong community spirit and much mutual support. Although we are scattered all over the United States and one member is in the Philippines, we keep in touch by mail, telephone, visits, e-mail, and audio- and videotape. Those who live close enough have a monthly day of recollection together; the others make private days of recollection. All who are able come together for an annual week of retreat every summer.

Additional information on the vocation of Secular Institutes can be found on the following website: www.secularinstitutes.org and www.fmjccommunity.com.

As you read our literature and perhaps consider the FMJC vocation, please pray to know and do only the will of God. Rest assured that you and all our inquirers are in my prayers and the prayers of all our Missionaries. We would be grateful for your prayers as well.

Your servant in Christ,

Alice Ann Cortez FMJC
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