

St. Clare House, Berkeley, CA



Brother Derek, SSF answered the call of the Religious Life after some years in Parish ministry in Wales. As a Franciscan brother in England, he led several Parish Missions and was Novice Tutor and Assistant Guardian at Alnmouth, having been Secretary to the Minister Provincial. In 1980 he came to the States and after a year was asked to stay and be Novice Guardian at San Damiano Friary. He also became the Chaplain of the County Jail. In 1991 he moved to St Elizabeth's Friary, Brooklyn, where he soon got the job of Chaplain at Goldwater Hospital in Manhattan where he worked for ten years. After fifteen years in Brooklyn, the last three as Minister Provincial, he went to Trinidad and was Rector of Siparia, a Parish with five churches. He likes to keep active. At the moment he is at the house in Berkeley, recovering from a year of operations, but he hopes to be fit for duty soon and maybe even go back to Trinidad.

The Society of St. Francis is a world-wide Franciscan community within the Anglican Communion. The Province of the Americas is part of the Episcopal Church.

St. Francis was born in Italy into a wealthy merchant family in the town of Assisi. Through war, imprisonment, and ill health he discovered humility. Through dreams, revelations and insights, he discovered God's calling for him.

We brothers of the Americas, some 800 years after his birth, have been inspired to come and follow Jesus through the inspiration of Brother Francis. Something about the simple joyful man touched us. For some it was his devotion, or his simplicity, his response to the environment, his life story, his loving relationship to his brothers, his call to peace. We individually follow God's call to us through the lens of Franciscan spirituality. This takes the form of traditional vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience. Each vow is accented with the notes of humility, joy and love.

About the Brothers

Whether we are on the streets in our habits, or talking to friends, family, or with visitors on retreat at our friaries, brothers are invariably asked many questions. While these may not be the questions you would have asked, we do receive these with some regularity. Maybe at some other time, we may publish infrequently, but memorably, asked questions.

While, we may like to think of ourselves as the best kept secret in the Episcopal Church, there are many other religious orders within the Episcopal Church. To find out more on these, look for retreats, or fulfill your call, please look to The CAROA website orders.anglican.org/caroa. CAROA is The Conference of Anglican Religious in the Americas. Help spread the word: ask your friends (especially bishops and priests), "Did you know there were Religious Orders in the Episcopal Church?" Thank you.

Our days are structured around our prayer life. In our San Francisco house, where the ministry is mainly focused outside of the friary or in novice classes and study, there are morning and evening prayer liturgies. The evening prayer service is followed by Mass. In our house in Long Island, we have four prayer services throughout the day: morning, noon, evening and night prayer which follows dinner. Mass is celebrated six days a week. Also, in both of our houses, we share meals together. So aside from prayers and meals, our schedules vary. Some brothers are ordained priests who have parish work, others volunteer their time in soup kitchens, homes for transients, some have full time jobs, others are chaplains, novices have classes several days a week, we all cook for our households and guests. At Little Portion Friary, the focus is on hospitality ministry with our guest house. We lead retreats and prepare sermons for our Sunday congregation. We bake bread. When people ask what do you do all day, it's easy to say "it depends on the day." Our lives are busy, rich and full. Time, just like in secular life, is something we never seem to have enough of.

Each knot on our cord symbolizes one of our vows. These are the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. For more on the vows, look to our Principles of the Order found in the Resources section and Becoming a Franciscan page of this website.

The main difference between Roman Catholic and Episcopalian Franciscans is a matter of authority. In other words, we don't have a pope. Episcopalian Franciscans operate on a smaller scale, but the differences are actually quite small. Both orders follow the Rule of St. Francis. Like Franciscans of all times we interpret it slightly differently than Francis may have but the main points are the same. We strive to live the Gospel life, we all accept the vows as disciplines, we take our prayer seriously, we work with people of all stripes, but especially the poor and under served. Francis created the Order within the Catholic Church, so Catholic Franciscans have an 800 year heritage of Franciscans within their church, while the Episcopalian/Anglican tradition is briefer -- within the last 100 years. We have had positive experiences working and praying together. We both read the same historical documents and our day to day life is very similar. One tradition, two churches - a blessing.

Unlike the medieval times of Francis, we do not go from house to house with begging bowls. However much of our income is dependent upon contributions. Several of the brothers have part-time or full-time work. All income goes to the Society and is shared. Another source of income comes from people coming for retreat at Little Portion Friary. The guest house there is occupied with people on weekends most of the year. Vestries and Christian and other community groups come for retreats as well as many individuals. The bakery at Little Portion is another source of income. But much support comes from people who love the Franciscans and have been moved either by our ministries or individuals in community. If you would like to make a donation, please visit our donation page on this site.

And, while our workload is lessened as we get older, there is not a set time for retirement. We take care of each other as we age, but we continue our ministries and contribute to community as health permits.