

Statement of Fundamental Principle for “Franciskushjälpen” (St. Francis’ Helpers)*

Introduction

“What you have done for the least of my brethren, you have done for me” (MATT. 25:40)
“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me (gave me shelter), I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you visited me.” (MATT. 25:35-36)

In his own day, St. Francis saw the face of the suffering Saviour in the lepers who lacked human fellowship as well as shelter and the necessities of life. Consequently, with St. Francis as our model, we have become engaged in “hands on” works of mercy in the tradition of mystical love for Christ in the poor and sick.

Fundamental principles

The Swedish Association of St. Francis’ Helpers, is an independent and non-political charitable organisation of the Roman Catholic Church that is Franciscan in orientation.

The fundamental principles of the Swedish Association of St. Francis’ Helpers have their origin in the diaconal work of the Church whereby Christian love comes to practical expression. The Church teaches us that love of our neighbour should be both universal and individual in application. This love should be the source of, and visible in all that we undertake.

There is a basic unity between what we are in Christ and what we do through him and for him. *“What you have done for the least of my brethren, you have done for me!” (MATT. 25:40)*, says Jesus. He has identified himself with the person in need whom we encounter along the road of life, particularly the one in dire need.

The Swedish Association of St. Francis’ Helpers derives special inspiration from St. Francis of Assisi. With him as our example we strive to give ourselves in wholehearted commitment to assisting the needy and relieving their suffering. We also intend continually to be alert to new areas where we may be of service.

The Swedish Association of St. Francis’ Helpers also derives inspiration from the Catholic social teaching embodied in *The Social and Pastoral Policy of the Catholic Diocese of Stockholm*, “*Man – the First Concern of the Church*”.

Our commitment is always to be characterised by respect and solicitude for life, which is the gift of God. Of first import is that we regard the gift of life itself as a sacred mystery, inviolable even in its most vulnerable stages.

Inasmuch as respect for human life is integral aspect of all our activity, we shall do all that lies in our power to insure the professional quality and competence of our work.

* The translation of “FRANCISKUSHJÄLPEN” is difficult. Other possibilities that would be more idiomatic English are FRANCISCAN AID, FRANCISCAN RELIEF, FRANCISCAN ASSISTANCE, but all of these sound more bureaucratic than the Swedish, which literally reads “FRANCIS-HELP”- perhaps – “help in the “spirit” of St. Francis.

Respect for human life also compels us to regard as indivisible, the synthesis of physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs that we are called to meet in each person.

With due humility, we intend to serve needy fellow human beings in a Franciscan and ecumenical spirit, without regard for religion, nationality or philosophy of life, and without violating the personal integrity of anyone.

In our work we shall strive to maintain authentic humility, following the example of the great saints of the Church.

The work of the Swedish Association of St. Francis' Helpers shall always be distinguished by the predominance of volunteers in its outreach.

Employed professionals of the Swedish Association of St. Francis' Helpers must always, in addition to their specific jobs, be engaged in the practical work of the volunteers. Volunteers and professionals alike shall endeavour to view themselves as the lesser servants of Christ upon whom it is incumbent to express Christian love through humble service.

Volunteers and professions of the Swedish Association of St. Francis' Helpers are obligated to be loyal to these principles and to act in accordance with all that they prescribe.