

Texts ## 4 + 5 combined
Engaging Secularization as a Value

Proposal: *The Province will engage in ongoing reflection and dialog on the impacts of secularization on our fraternal life and ministries, with a focus on discerning, engaging, and integrating those trends and other elements of secularization that are consistent with the life and mission of the Church and the Province. Beginning at Provincial Chapter 2023 or shortly thereafter, friars gather in small groups to share what each one has taken from secularization as a value in their lives and how it fits with our Capuchin values.*

Background Information

1. In much of the Church, secularization is considered a threat to our life and mission. To some extent, this is true and inherent to secularization. However, there are elements of secularization that are consistent with or at least not opposed. Here are two examples:
 - a. Secularization emphasizes the importance of reason and science. Catholicism has long valued the importance of reason, including in theology. In addition, the Church has a long history of engagement with science. While it is an admittedly mixed history, Catholic priests, religious, and laity have been at the forefront of many scientific discoveries. The Holy See has had a Pontifical Academy of Sciences since 1936.
 - b. Secularization or at least non-sectarianism is an important part of the “American experiment” of constitutional democracy in a republican form of government. The First Amendment’s Establishment and Free-Exercise Clauses protect religious liberty while also preventing the establishment of a state religion or the tyranny of a religious majority.
2. The train of secularization has left the station here in the USA, and it is a steadily growing force in many parts of the world. The speed and reach of this train will only grow with the expansion of technology and social media. In the face of this, denial is foolish, and defensiveness is self-defeating. Healthy engagement, which includes affirmation, conversation, and cooperation where possible, is a better option.
3. Much of what we take for granted or understand as part of our in the Church today, from our liturgical life to our structures, is rooted in the engagement of the community of faith with the world around us. For example, the cassock and the chasuble, considered two quintessentially ecclesiastical garments, were originally secular garb. This kind of adaptation is another dimension of the Church’s catholicity or universality.
4. Our Capuchin values, such as our emphases on contemplation, openness to the Spirit, God's providence, closeness to the poor and suffering, the joy of preaching the gospel of God's compassionate love, the preciousness of each brother and sister, and care for creation, enable people to see how God is working in our increasingly secularized world.