LIVING THE GOSPEL

THE HISTORY AND SPIRITUALITY

OF THE

SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

(REVISED SEPTEMBER 2005)

Lessons in Secular Franciscan Spirituality

by

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Illustrations were mainly the work of Jennie Harpea SFO except the following:

Page	**Illustration**	**Author**
9	St Clare	Unknown
12	State & Church	Jenny Hapea
13	New Movements	Jenny Hapea
14	St Francis & the cross	Unknown
20	Bl. Luchesio	Unknown
25	The Primitive Rule	Jenny Hapea
28	Francis' Exhortations	Jenny Hapea
29	Rule of Innocent IV	Jenny Hapea
54	St Francis & the Cross	Author unknown
61	Chalice (adapted)	author unknown
64	Cardinal van Thuan	internet photo
79	Tau Cross	SFO

All bible quotes come from *The Good News for Modern Man,* Australian Edition, The Bible Society

Dedication

This work is dedicated to the Brothers and Sisters of the Secular Franciscan Order who continue to do God's work in their daily lives with dedication and patience.

Preface

The Secular Franciscan Order has already celebrated its Silver Jubilee under that title with the Rule of 1978 of Paul VI, yet in that time it appears that there are many who still have not grasped the new approaches to the Order. I have attempted in this series of lessons to produce guidelines for instructing not only new members of the SFO but older ones as well. There is much all can learn from a deeper study of the Rule and Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order. While trying to keep to simplicity in presentation, I have also tried to go deeper into the meaning of the Rule.

One cannot delve deeply into the Rule without first examining the history and evolution of the Order. I have divided this work into parts: Part One gives a brief outline of the Franciscan Family and displays the Family Tree to give some perspective to our study. Then in Part Two, I examine the beginnings of the Secular Franciscan Order, first under the title of the Order of Penitents and then the Third Order. Part Three examines the Rule of Paul VI in some detail and provides some exercises to bring it to life in today's world.

The Third Order Regular will be dealt with briefly towards the end of this course but only in relation to the Secular Franciscan Order. To do more would go beyond the scope of this essay.

I am hoping that this work will be useful to many who need a helping hand and that it will help all to live a richer Franciscan life.

Fraternally,

Norbert Pittorino, ofm

22nd May, 2005

INTRODUCTION

This series of lessons is intended to instruct members or those interested in the Secular Franciscan Order. The lessons are presented as samples and not the finished product which should be "personalized" by the instructor to suit the audience. What is here is mainly the contents of the lessons. Some lessons may need to be divided into two or more lessons because of the amount that is covered as presented here. That is up to the discretion of the teacher-animator according to the participants involved.

Many stories can be added to help bring out the point of each lesson. Some suggested activities will be presented but others may be used in addition or to substitute what is presented in these notes. Flexibility is very important, and I leave each person to interpret the best way of presenting the material that I have presented in my way. I am sure there are many more ways that could be used which is left to the initiative of each teacher.

I have not attempted to add many hymns or music to these notes, but that does not mean that it can't be added to help the lessons. Any teaching aids which a teacher feels will enhance the material may be used according to the discretion of each teacher. Short dramas, or mime or other presentations through art, music, dance or pantomime are welcome to bring the lessons to life. I do hope that these lessons will be enjoyable experiences and, at the same time, instructive and helpful.

Every lesson should start with motivation, an incentive to help participants want to know more, and so create immediate interest in the topic to be explained or discussed. The best method to do this seems to be one where the material is drawn out from the students or members rather than taking the form of a lecture. Most of those who want information about the Secular Franciscan Order have some information that can contribute to the overall lesson. It is up to the animator teacher to draw this out and make the point of the lesson clear.

The basic rules of teaching apply: Never talk too long. Keep the students occupied in some form of activity. Use local knowledge to help create greater interest in the topic. Find reports and stories in newspapers, magazines or books and use them to create an atmosphere of interest and a keenness to know more. All involved in the lesson should be creative in their work. These days there is no reason for a lesson to become boring and uninteresting if it has been well prepared. Make sure that prayer has an important place in the lesson.

This book has been divided up into parts to help clarify the logical sequence of events and the development of the spirituality of the Secular Franciscan Order:

Part One: The Franciscan Family

Part Two: How the Secular Franciscan Order Began

Part Three: The Evolution of the SFO Rule

Part Four: The Spirituality of the SFO

PART ONE

THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

LESSON 1: THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY

It is often good to begin with a prayer for guidance, or a hymn of Praise.

Introduction:

Show a picture of a happy family at a meal or similar situation. Use this as a basis for further discussion.

Activity: Everyone wants to be happy. Share this question with each other to discover what opinion others in your group have: "What do you think makes a happy family?"

(Allow about 15 minutes for discussion, and then ask for replies.)

Let us see what others have said. Here are some possible answers: Good parents; Loving children; Cheerful sharing; Cooperation among the members; Praying together; Sharing the same spiritual values, etc.

The Church is a family.

We need to understand that:

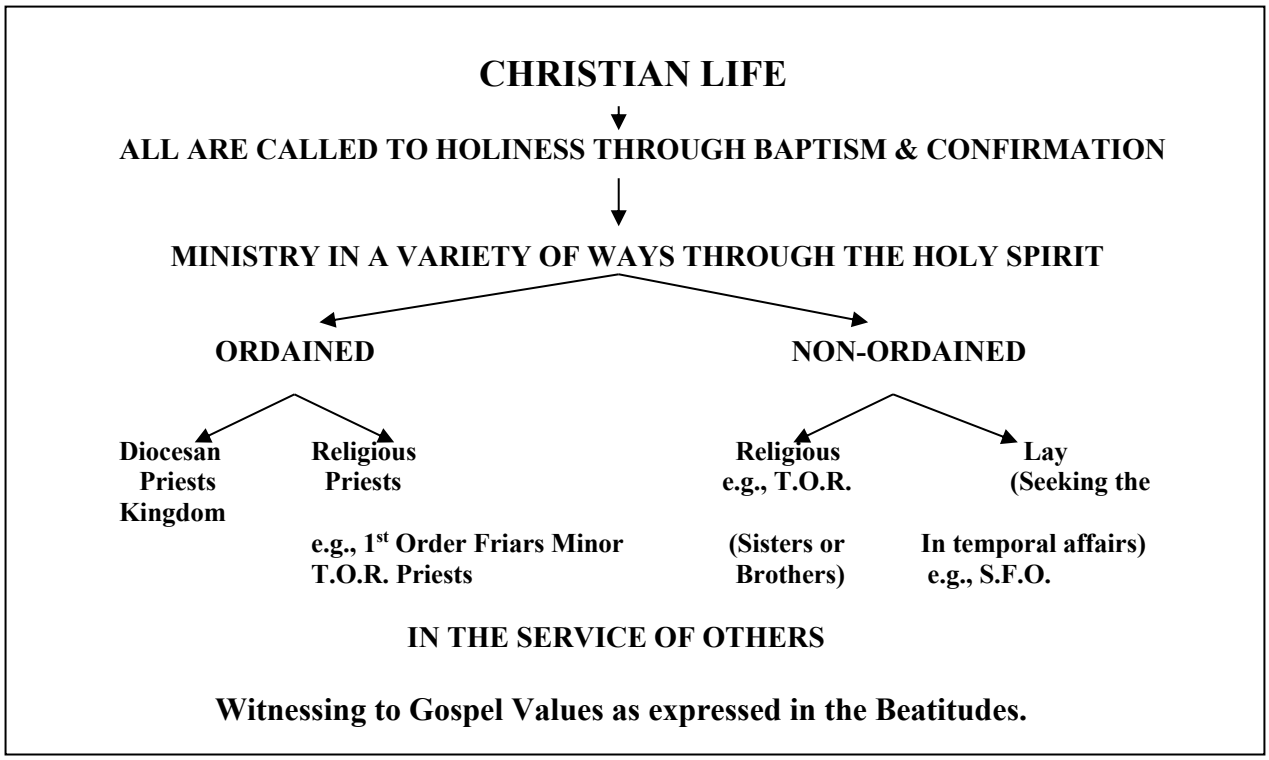
1. The Church is a world-wide family, and all those things we said about our ideal family should also be part of the Church family.

2. In our modern family, individual members belong to different kinds of groups where they can find friendship and support. For example, one may belong to a football club, another to a golf club; or another to a society for the protection of the environment, etc. (Let others suggest other groups that members could belong to.)

- How would you picture the Church as a Family? The Church is actually a family of families.

- Think of your family as part of the Parish family. That is part of the Diocese family; that is part of the national family and that of the world family of the Church. How would you show this using a diagram?

LESSON 2: RELATIONSHIPS AMONG THE DIFFERENT STATES OF LIFE



Explanation of the Chart[1]

All Christians are striving for holiness through baptism and confirmation. Each one carries out his/her role in the Church in different ways. Some work as priests; some are religious, and others carry out their ministry in religious communities of lay people carrying out works of mercy; or some are married with families and give their service to God in the ordinary activities of their lives.

The Holy Spirit works in all of these men and women, inspiring them to do God's work by their example and service to each other. All, in their own way, bring the saving message of the Gospel to the needy and those who do not know about God and his love.

St Paul writes about this in his letter to the Corinthians. Let us stop to reflect on it.

Scripture Reflection

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit gives them.
There are different ways of serving, but the same Lord is served.
There are different abilities to perform service, but the same God gives ability to all for their particular service.
The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each person for the good of all.

[1] It is a good idea to build up this chart gradually on a chalkboard or white board as you get responses to questions.

The Spirit gives one person a message full of wisdom, while to another person the same Spirit gives a message full of knowledge.
One and the same Spirit gives faith to one person, while to another person he gives the power to heal.
The Spirit gives to one person the power to work miracles; to another the power of speaking God's message….
But it is one and the same Spirit who does all this; as he wishes he gives a different gift to each person.
Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts.
In the same way, all of us…have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink. *- 1 Cor 12:4 – 10.11 - 13*

Some Questions to Discuss

1. Name some of the gifts that you recognize in your community. How does one help the other?

2. What are some of the roles that various people have in your parish? How can we help others in their role?

LESSON 3: THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

The Church also has many groups that add to its richness. Some are devoted to charitable works following a particular spirituality. The Secular Franciscan Order is such a group where the members form a family; but that family is also part of a larger family of the Church.

"The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in the Franciscan family circle. It is composed of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters are led by the Spirit and strive for perfect love and sharing in their own secular state."[2]

Who are the members of the Franciscan Family?

The Franciscan Family is a name we give to all those who share in the Franciscan charism. That means all the members of **the First Order (Friars Minor)**, the **Second Order (the Poor Clare Sisters)** and the **Third Orders of St Francis** (This includes the members of the Third Order Regular and the Secular Franciscan Order).

The Franciscan Family is one of the many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church. It unites all members of the People of God – all lay people, all religious and priests who are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Francis of Assisi.

As members of the one family, they share the same faith and each one is ready to help another as a wantok[3]. All that they do must work to build up the whole family, cooperating with each other and encouraging each other following the example of St Francis and St Clare.

St Francis tried very hard to show his friars that they were to be one close-knit family and that they should greet each other as very close friends. He said in his Rule:

> *"Wherever the friars meet one another, they should show that they are members of the same family. And they should have no hesitation in making known their needs to one another. For is a mother loves and cares for her child in the flesh, a friar should certainly love and care for his spiritual brother all the more tenderly. If a friar falls ill, the others are bound to look after him as they would like to be looked after themselves." RB 6*

If this is true of every friar, it is just as true for any Franciscan that he or she should love and care for his spiritual brother or sister. This one characteristic that should mark all Franciscans: that they love and care for each other as true brothers and sisters in the one family. This is what Jesus taught us in the Gospels and this is the message St Francis took to heart right from the start of his Order. To fail in this is to fail in one of the most basic requirements of the Order and of every Christian.

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[2] SFO Rule, chapter 1 #2

[3] This is a Melanesian Pidgin word which refers to those who share the same language, or home village or town, or come from the same area. It presupposes that one is ready to help and support the other person who shares the same country of origin or region. The "Wantok System" can be used for great good, or it can be abused and used for evil.

All the brothers and sisters of the First, Second and Third Orders (This includes the Secular Franciscan Order) must express this behaviour in all they do and say and as genuine disciples of Francis and Clare.

Prayer of St Francis[4]

This is the prayer of Francis that he prayed when he knelt before the Crucifix Icon in the church of San Damiano. Francis was asking God for guidance. Let us follow his example and ask God to help as, just as St Francis did so long ago:

> O great and glorious God and my Lord, Jesus Christ,
> enlighten, I beseech thee, the darkness of my *mind*.
> Give me a right faith, a certain hope, and a perfect charity.
> Grant that I may know thee, in order that I may always and in all things act according to thy most holy and perfect will. Amen.

Note: the Latin text says "enlighten…the darkness of *my heart*" which seems to me to be a better translation than the one given here. The "heart" in Scripture means "the whole person" including one's feelings and emotions. We pray for a conversion of our whole person to give God everything of ourselves to his service.

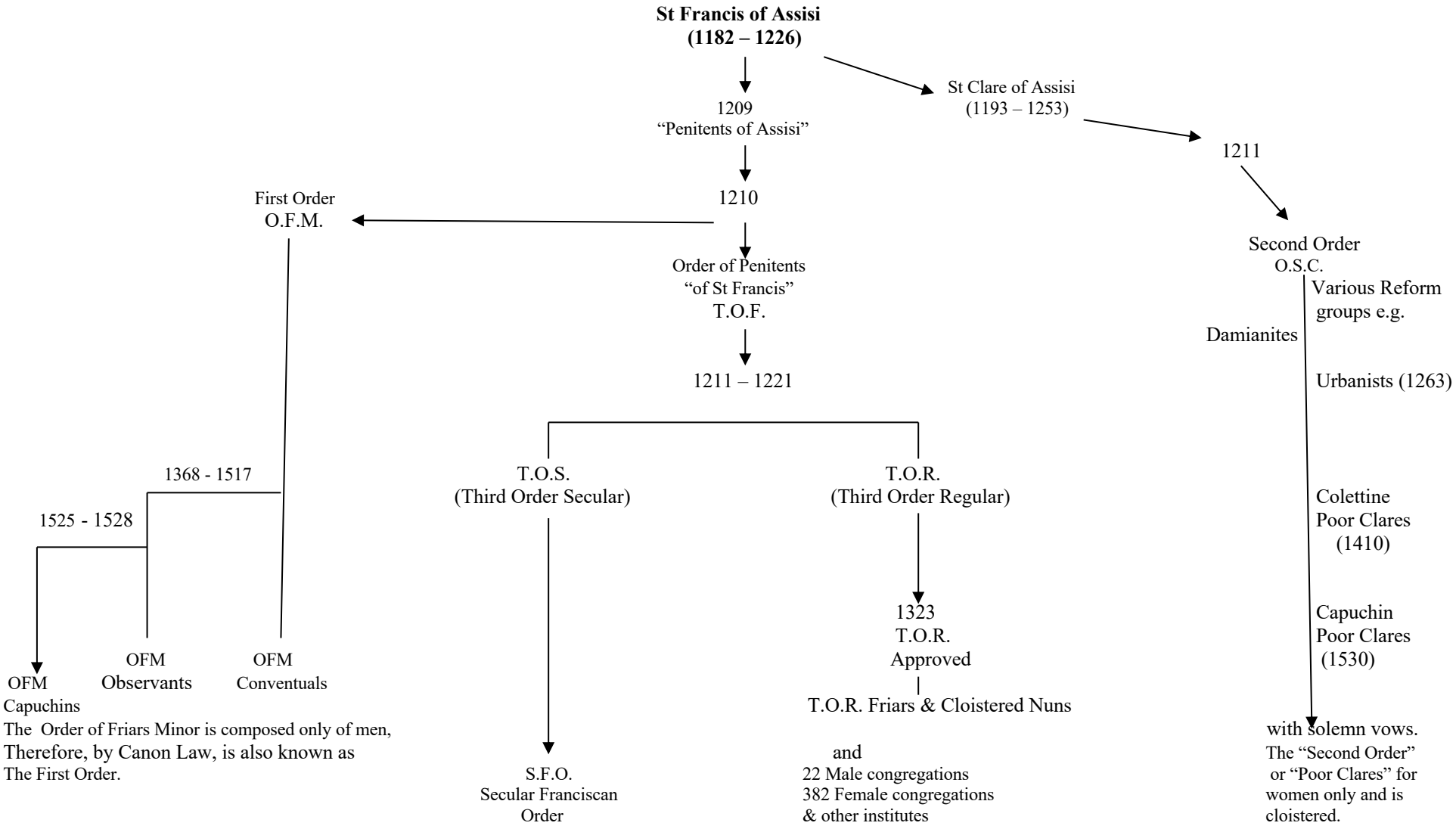
Activity:

Write a prayer of your own asking the Holy Spirit for guidance in your life. If you wish, you could share it with others.

HYMN: Choose a hymn that expresses this idea of Conversion e.g., "Come back to me"

[4] Early Documents, *The Founder,* p. 76

THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY TREE



LESSON 4: FRANCISCANS OF THE FIRST ORDER

Hymn: e.g. "They'll know we are Christians" or the like.

Who make up the FIRST ORDER OF ST FRANCIS?

Refer to the Chart on page 5 above.

THE ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

History:

1. **In the time of St Francis**
   There were small groups of friars who supported themselves by their trades. They preached and gave Gospel witness by their lives.
   In 1217, the **Chapter of Mats** took place when the friars were sent out on mission to other countries e.g., Germany, England, and France. There was enormous growth in the number of friars which changed the character of the original primitive group. There were up to 5 000 friars by the death of Francis in 1226.

2. **Shortly after Francis' death**
   By 1250, the focus was on pastoral ministry because the friars were seen as useful in carrying out the decrees of the 4th Lateran Council (1215). Their main work was in preaching and hearing confessions (Reconciliation). The nature of the Order changed from lay to a clerical congregation. Friars settled around cities and some were involved in centres of learning. Many refused absolute poverty.

3. **Reaction over Poverty**
   There was a reaction to the tendency to relax poverty. In the late 14th century, the **Observant Reform** tried to return to the primitive ideals of St Francis. Those who resisted this reform were called **Conventuals.** In 1517, the Order was split into two.

4. **Further Reform:**
   Within the Observants, there was another group who wanted even further reform. In 1528, the **Capuchin Reform** came about. The Capuchins, as they were called, were very popular preachers and spread quickly especially over Italy. In 1536, the Capuchins were approved by Clement VII.

5. **The Leonine Union (1897)**
   Other reform groups formed also so there were many small groups of friars spread throughout the world. Leo XIII gathered all these groups together and they were united in what is called the "Leonine Union". So today, the Order is divided into three independent congregations: All three make up the First Order of St Francis:
   The **Conventuals (O.F.M. Conv.)**, The **Observants (O.F.M.),** The **Capuchins (OFM. Cap)**

Exercise

See what you can find out about these three branches of the First Order of St Francis. Name at least one Saint from each of these three. What differences do you see in these three branches of the Order today?

End the lesson by composing a prayer to thank God for these three branches of the Order who have given such variety to the Church today.

LESSON 5: THE SECOND ORDER OF ST FRANCIS (THE POOR CLARES)

(Refer to page 5 above)

The closest follower of St Francis in following the ideal of poverty was St Clare of Assisi. Shortly after Francis' conversion, in 1211, that Clare met Francis for the first time. She had heard him preach in the cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi. She would not have known him before this as her family and she had escaped to Perugia when there was a revolt against the nobles in Assisi and there was an assault on La Rocca, the symbol of power of the nobles. When the danger had passed, Clare returned to Assisi with her noble family of the Offreduccio. Clare was never attached to wealth and it was well-known that she often went out of her way to help the poor and the sick. In fact, she had a reputation for holiness even before she began her new life as a follower of St Francis.

Once she had decided that it was Francis' way of life that she wanted to follow, there was nothing that could stop her, despite the fact that her parents had tried to arrange a marriage for her according to the custom of the time. Clare wanted a life of poverty following the poor and suffering Jesus. Her valiant escape from her home is a story that is well known. It was late at night when she climbed through the "door of the dead" to meet Francis and the friars at the little chapel of Our Lady of the Angels on Palm Sunday night, 1212. It was there she made her commitment to offer her life to the Lord in a life of service and poverty.

Clare was always a close companion of St Francis. She found inspiration from him, and, at the same time, he was often encouraged by her. There was a deep spiritual relationship between the two. In fact, after Francis' death, it was Clare who developed the Franciscan charism and wrote her own Rule in imitation of St Francis. Her spirituality is unique and gave the feminine aspect to the charism we have come to know so well.

It was not long before Clare had Sisters who accompanied her to San Damiano where she spent the rest of her life. Francis gave Clare the assurance that the Friars would never abandon her and would take care of her Sisters. That continues even until today, the special charge of the Friars Minor.

The Second Order also had many reforms and has taken shape in different ways in various places. There is an effort now to bring greater unity amongst the Poor Clares, while, at the same time, respecting their autonomy.

Exercise

See what you can find out about the life of St Clare and her Sisters. Try to discover more about their spirit of love and simplicity and especially their work in the Mission of the Church. Who are some of the Poor Clare Saints that you know about? Share your story with the group. Their life of prayer and contemplation as an enclosed Order can inspire us to greater efforts in our prayer life as well.

PART TWO

HOW

THE SECULAR

FRANCISCAN ORDER

BEGAN

LESSON 6: HOW DID THE THIRD ORDER OF ST FRANCIS START?

Introduction

The other member of the Franciscan Family is the Third Order of St Francis. In the beginning, it was not known as the Third Order but "The Brothers and Sisters of Penance". We need to see why the Third Order was given that name; but before we can do so, we must look into the conditions and the times in the 12th and 13th centuries.

A Time of Change

The Third Order did not just appear out of nowhere. It was the result of a long period of preparation. There were movements and undercurrents among the people well before St Francis appeared on the scene. This is the way that the Holy Spirit works. We often find that when the Church is in need, God raises up the appropriate remedy to help us.

In the period from the mid-12th century until the mid-13th century is marked by a remarkable amount of change not only in civil life but also in the Church. There was not a complete separation of Church and State at this time so that what happened in one area was also affecting what was happening in the other. When the Feudal System began to break up and people began moving around and forming new towns and cities, this also affected what was happening in the Church.

The old system of barter was being replaced by the use of money, and this led to people coming to understand that having money meant having power. Where before power was a privilege of the few nobles, now power was moving into the hands of merchants, such as, Pietro Bernadone, Francis' father. Francis was not a noble, but he was well off and his friends said that before his conversion, he acted like a noble.

When people were on the land, they grew what they needed to eat. They had houses to live in and were protected by their masters. However, when people moved into the towns and cities, the situation was different. They depended on others for their needs and they had no assurance of protection from enemies. It became obvious that the old system where they could go to the monasteries for assistance in their hospices or religious who would feed them was unable to cope. It was then that the laity began to take over these works of mercy, even the care of lepers and the underprivileged.

Exercises

- See what you can find out about the Feudal System. Gather ideas from others and try to understand how the people lived under this system.

- Compare the old Manor System with that of the old monasteries. Note the similarities and the differences.

- From the above study, do you understand why Francis did not want to join one of the established Orders in the Church? Discuss this with others.

LESSON 7: NEW MOVEMENTS OF EVANGELICAL LIFE

We need to see what was happening in the spiritual lives of ordinary lay people at this time, that is, the early 13th century.

People were dissatisfied with the kind of piety that was being offered to them by the Church at this time. They wanted more than just popular religion and devotions. They were seeking a deeper spiritual life imitating the monks or nuns in their monasteries. Many turned to the *Acts of the Apostles* for inspiration. Here are two of the main texts[5]:

"All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, praising God, and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved."

"The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had. With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all."

- Let us see what these two texts are saying. List the things that you see that are demanded who lived according to this ideal.

This is what I found:

- Believers shared all they had with each other pooling all their possessions and selling them and then giving to others in need.
- They were all in full agreement on this course of action and showed love for one another.
- They would frequently meet together and share their meals together, pray together and support each other both physically and spiritually.
- By doing all these things, many others came to join the group so that the lives of many people were changed.

By following this new way of life, people were convinced that they could follow the Gospel just like the monks and still live out in the world. They saw Christian life as a vocation and function of the laity. They felt they could achieve holiness even out "in the world" and this would satisfy the hunger they felt for a deeper spiritual life.

Many modelled their lives on Christ and the Blessed Virgin Mary. They wanted a piety based on the Gospels with poverty as its authentic basis. The laity became a driving force in the community of believers and often filled the gaps left by lax, ignorant, and mediocre clergy. It is clear the Holy Spirit was working in the people despite the failure of the clergy.

[5] Cf. Acts 2:44 – 47; 4:32 - 35

This group of people led a strict life. The Gospel was to be their inspiration where they would discover an authentic “apostolic life.” Some lay people were given the right to preach and their way of life especially their material poverty fascinated people because they stood in contrast to the clergy. As numbers increased, they formed into groups. Without proper guidance some fell into heresy and were condemned by the Church. That is why Pope Innocent III had to be so wary when Francis approached him to have his Rule approved.

Questions for Discussion

- What does this tell you about the people of that time in relation to their faith?
- What difficulties did they have to face?
- Why did the people lose confidence in the clergy?
- How did Francis regard the clergy despite their faults?
- What practical conclusions can you draw from this discussion?

LESSON 8: THE ORDER OF PENITENTS

The name "Order of Penitents" refers to that group of people who, following the ancient discipline of the Church, spent time in performing penance in order to obtain pardon for their sins. From the early centuries, the Church outlined a penitential doctrine which said that the Christian could obtain pardon of his/her sins provided that he/she "did penance".

The term "penance" must be understood in the sense it was intended in the Bible. This was "to change direction, a turning away from sin and turning to God again." The same term was used for "conversion", that is, *metanoia* in Greek. The sinner entered into the category of or the Order of Penitents and remained in it until he/she had fulfilled what was required. (The requirements were fixed by the Christian assembly with the Bishop at its head.)

From the second century, this idea of penance kept developing until it was understood that "penance" would only be undertaken once in a lifetime. In fact, from the 4th century, penitents were forbidden to do more and more even after the time of penance had ended until one died. Thus, the penitent was forbidden, even though reconciled, to take up military service, to dedicate himself to trading and was forbidden positions in public life. Penitential law became so severe that penitents became fewer and fewer who entered the Order of Penitents. People waited until they were dying before they attempted to receive the sacrament of Penance.

However, a strange thing happened. People who were not sinners applied to join the Order of Penitents even though they had no obligation to do so. They wanted to join it in order to reach perfection. They voluntarily subjected themselves to penitential laws and were prepared to remain in it for the rest of their lives. These people were simply called "Penitents".

St Francis and the Order of Penitents

At the time of Francis, the penitential movement was still alive especially in certain forms (hermits, recluses, penitent sisters) even if the number of individual Penitents were lessening and the same movement was in danger from the attack and infiltrating preaching of the Cathari and the Waldensians. Amongst the Christian population, however, there was still an inexhaustible thirst for spiritual guidance which, by life and word, would show the people the way to follow in order to remain faithful to God and the Church.

It is a fact that when Francis and his companions began in 1209/10 their itinerant preaching of penance, in a penitential movement, there was an immediate and unexpected vigorous awakening, a religious rebirth which historians call a Penitential movement in the 12th century, or "a penitential movement revived by St Francis."

First of all, we know from Thomas of Celano and Giordano da Giano that Francis himself became a Penitent, immediately after the enlightening experience of San Damiano. According to Celano, in fact, Francis sought and obtained from the priest at San Damiano permission to remain at the church "to serve the Lord."[6] Thus be became an oblate or *conversus,* a form of penitential official.

The *conversus* or penitent was considered a true religious and therefore outside the jurisdiction of the civil authorities. It was precisely for this reason that communal authority of Assisi to whom Francis' father, Pietro Bernadone, had turned to issue a summons so as to accuse his son of rebellion and dissipation. Francis responded to say that he was no longer under the jurisdiction of civil authorities but a servant only of the Most High God. (L3C 9). They had to stop with their attempts and replied to his father: "Seeing that your son has been consecrated to the service of God, he is no longer under our jurisdiction."[7]

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[6] 1 Cel 9

[7] Pazzelli, Raffaele, op. cit.

Giordano da Giano affirms Francis' entrance into the "life of penance". In his chronicle he begins: "In the year of the Lord, 1207, Francis, by profession a merchant, having been moved in heart and touched by the Holy Spirit, began a life of penance wearing the habit of a hermit. Celano as well as Julian of Speyer and other legends repeatedly say that Francis had embraced the habit of penance. We are also told that Francis remained in this way of life for at least two years. His first followers also joined the Order of Penance renouncing everything and putting on the same sackcloth and leading the same kind of life as Francis.[8]

The Humiliati

In 1178, some weavers and some farmers in Lombardy formed a group of Penitents called "Humiliati". These were made up of priests, single women, and married couples. Later, in 1201, Innocent III divided these up into three Orders. The First Order Humiliati members were clerics; the Second Order Humiliati was composed of single women; and the Third Order Humiliati was made up of married couples who took on the name the "Third Order of the Humiliati".[9]

Innocent III approved the Third Order of the Humiliati in 1201. They had a *Propositum* or *Plan of Life* which was approved. The Humiliati are of greatest interest because they had the concept of forming a **Fraternity.** This was the characteristic of Franciscans later.

In 1221, a statute called *"Memoriale of the Propositum of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance residing in their own homes"* – a Plan of Life for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance was approved and adopted by the followers of St Francis.

Discussion Questions

- Can you relate to the feeling of the people of the 12th century who wanted a "deeper spirituality" for their lives? Discuss this.
- What dangers do you see in following such a desire without proper guidance?
- How does the Secular Franciscan Order try to address this problem today?
- What forms of penance would you suggest for an SFO Fraternity today?

[8] L3C 25, 27

[9] Note that this was not the only group of Penitents. In 1184, the **Poor Catholics** from Northern Italy in the region of Vicenza formed a rural community composed of domestics who lived in their own homes, and who worked in common, shared their goods, their buildings and implements, and their produce. Their Plan of Life was approved in 1210 as well as other Penitents.

LESSON 9: THE FOURTH LATERAN COUNCIL (1215)

"The Church in the time of St Francis found it had to include new spiritual movements of the Gospel life within the church's law of that age. The itinerant and apostolic life of those movements did not fit within the framework of the institutions of religious life of monks or canons. This kind of life was not considered in the body of canon law and did not come into the diocesan set-up of the time. They were shaking up church life because of their newness and their spirit of initiative. They were movements which rapidly expanded beyond the limits of any one diocese and were tied rather to the universal Church.[10]

Pope Innocent III, from the beginning of his pontificate, was convinced of the necessity of a new evangelization of the people. He could see that, with the help of new apostolic groups, he could deal with the situation the church was in at that time. In many ways, he had tried to re-animate the traditional ecclesiastical institutions, such as dioceses and parishes enlisting the collaboration of the monasteries. He tried to give new life to the Gospel with lived witness and proclamation of the Word. He saw in the new catholic faith movements a possible answer to the need to find a new apostolic force. But for this, he needed to welcome these new Catholic faith movements and not consider them associated with movements that were tainted with heresy or influenced by wrong doctrinal ideas. He declared himself ready to discuss these matters and he proposed, within the limits of possibility, to cooperate with what they wanted insofar as possible within the law. So, in 1208 he brought the "Poor Catholics" of Durando of Huesca back to the unity of the Church and in 1211 the "Poor Lombards." In 1210 he welcomed the request of St Francis and his first companions and confirmed "as an experiment" their form of life.

It was not easy to integrate these new movements with church legislation. A new way of thinking was needed, outside the traditional legal forms, which would safeguard orthodoxy of the faith, communion with the church, and sufficient autonomy in apostolic initiative. It seems that Innocent III, after his positive experience with Francis and his companions, saw the need to recognize this new way of religious life fully and officially in the Church, alongside traditional forms. He also saw the need to avoid future confusion of an excessive diversity of Rules or types of religious life.

The IV Lateran Council in 1215 decided to give a solid juridical base to the new movements of religious life, modelled on the Franciscan experience, and at the same time to avoid an excessive variety of types of religious life**. It determined, in its Constitution 13, that the new religious movements must pick a Rule or type of religious life from among those already approved.** With this decision the Council wanted to give strict norms for the foundation of new houses or religious families and at the same time regulate the juridical position of the new movements of the apostolic life. Jacques de Vitry in 1221, six years after the 4th Lateran Council, expressed it this way: "Up to now there have been three religious Orders: hermits, monks, and canons. But in order that the state of those living according to a Rule might rest firmly on a solid foundation, the Lord in these days has added a fourth form of religious life, the embellishment of a new Order, and the holiness of a new Rule" (ibid.p.582)

It seems that the 4th Lateran Council had considered the type of religious life of the Friars Minor a valid model for other new movements of religious life and consequently, its Rule or Form of Life would serve as an example to anyone who wanted to start a new house or new religious family of that kind, of "the true poor of the Crucified One and of the order of preachers whom we call Lesser Brothers."[11]

Another implication of the Council was that St Clare was forced to choose one of the established Rules for her Order. She chose the Benedictine Rule which she observed for about forty years until she wrote her own Rule which was accepted by the Church a few days before her death.

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[10] Brevoort, ofm Cap. Op. cit.

[11] Remember that Francis had his Rule approved verbally by Honorius III in 1209/10 so that Innocent's approval only confirmed in writing what already existed.

Discussion Questions

- The 4th Lateran Council is an important Council in the Church's history. What other things do you know happened at that Council concerning Franciscans?

- One of the events narrated about the 4th Lateran Council is the meeting of St Francis with St Dominic. How is that remembered today?

- The 4th Lateran Council would not permit any new Rules to be accepted by the Church. How is it that St Francis' Rule was accepted?

- The 4th Lateran Council was a reforming and a pastoral Council. See if you can find out what decisions were made at that Council.

- How did the 4th Lateran Council affect St Clare and her Sisters?

LESSON 10: FIRST BEGINNINGS OF THE THIRD ORDER[12]

Francis' conversion, the restoration of the church of San Damiano, and his retreat to the mountains shocked quite a few people in Assisi. To see the young Francis Bernadone stripping himself of everything, his preaching of penance and of peace caused people to wonder. They began to think in favour of him. It was not long before disciples began to gather around St Francis. Francis accepted them as gifts from God: "The Lord gave me some brothers" (2 Test 16). With these new companions he formed a new form of religious life based on the Gospel. The small Fraternity, composed of brothers, was approved by Pope Honorius III in 1209/10.

Their way of living attracted many lay people: People saw their poverty, their brotherliness, their prayer life, their manual work, their penance, and work among the poor and their evangelical preaching of conversion and peace despite the bad treatment they had received from scoffing crowds. People saw that their houses were poor. Rich and poor were treated alike. Francis advised them: "Such must be the behaviour of the friars in the midst of people that whoever listens to and hears them may be instructed and so glorify and praise the heavenly Father."[13]

It became obvious that the Lord communicated his word to them, and his Spirit inspired them so that they could speak in such a way that their words penetrated the hearts of the people, both young and old. People were attracted to this way of life and the *Legend of the Three Companions* notes "Each of these three Orders was approved in its own time after having cited the request of a married man it says, "The brothers regrouped them into an Order which bore the name of 'Penitents', and they had the approval of the Pope." Tradition has made Luchesio and Buanadonna from Poggiabonsi in Tuscany the first Tertiaries received by St Francis himself.

Thus, these lay men and women, disciples of St Francis, joined in community. But what was their Rule of life? We mentioned earlier the *Propositum* or Plan of Life of the Brothers and Sisters living in their own homes. This came into being in 1221 and was adopted by the Franciscan Penitents.

Furthermore, the minister had the faculty, firstly, having advised the Fraternity beforehand, to adapt (suppress or add) the articles of the *Memoriale*. Without doubt, such action would constitute what specific social group the Fraternity belonged to and conferred a distinct moral personality upon it. In the parishes or the cities where the Fraternity lived it appeared with its own ministers, meetings, ceremonies and works as a true corporate organization.

- What signs are there in the life of Francis that indicate that he became a Penitent before he followed a new way of life?

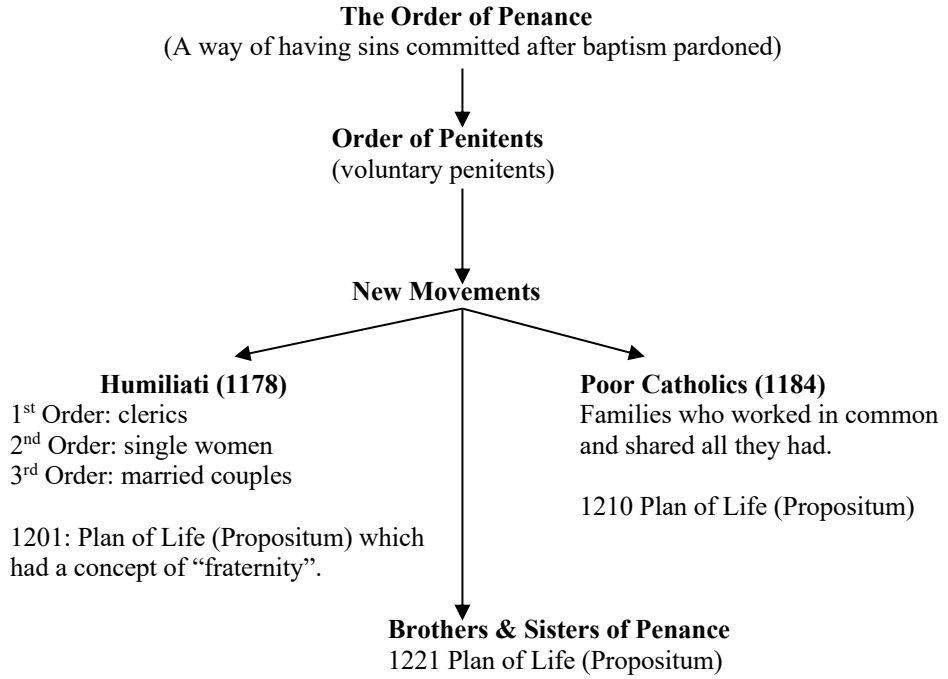
Activity

- Discuss how the Holy Spirit had prepared the way for the Secular Franciscan Order over the years. The facts of history fascinate us. Outline the steps in a simple way to show how this happened to the SFO.

- Examine the diagram below and discuss how these early movements prepared the way for the SFO.

[12] Bedrune, L., op. cit. (adapted)
[13] L3c 58

SUMMARY:



1215 4th Lateran Council: All must choose an approved Rule to follow. The Brothers & Sisters of Penance chose the Franciscan Rule to follow.

LESSON 11: A Story to Read

THE FIRST FRANCISCAN TERTIARIES: BL. LUCHESIO AND BL. BUONADONNA

lessed Buonadonna and Blessed Luchesio Modestini came from the little town of Poggibonsi in Tuscany, Italy. Luchesio (= Lucius) was a merchant who was regarded by many as being very greedy to heap up Bmoney for himself, and his wife was much the same. Actually, one would think that these two people were the most unlikely ones to become Franciscan tertiaries. Luchesio was born in Val d'Elsa which was then in the territory belonging to Florence. As a young man he was entirely taken up with politics and money-making and worldly interests. In fact, his attachment to the Guelf (political) cause made him so unpopular that he had to leave his native town, Gaggiano, and go to live in Poggiabonsi where he continued as a provision merchant and moneylender.

Then when Luchesio was between the ages of thirty or forty, a great change took place in him. We are not sure just what caused this change. Legend has it that it was the result of the death of his children that caused his heart to be changed by divine grace; another legend says that the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to him and gave him several admonitions and instructed him to perform works of mercy and to embrace a life of poverty. Whatever the reasons might have been, Luchesio began doing works of mercy and helping others. Somehow Luchesio realized how foolish it was to follow such a worldly life as he had done, and he changed. His wife, however, was not so keen to change.

One day, Buonadonna (a name that means "good woman" in Italian) was complaining that Luchesio was giving everything to strangers when someone came to the door who was in need. Luchesio asked his wife to give the stranger some bread. She was not happy about it, but she went to the cupboard and, to her surprise, she found more bread there than she had ever had. This incident changed her completely. She also began to carry out works of mercy. Since they had no children to care for, they feared that they might fall back into their old ways. It ended up that Luchesio and Buonadonna sold their business and farmed enough land to provide for their needs and gave the rest to the poor.

It was about this time that Francis came to Tuscany. As was his custom, he preached to the people about doing penance. Many people heard him and many of those who heard him wanted to leave everything and come and join him. But Francis advised them to remain with their families. He would give them a Rule of life that they could follow even in the world.

Francis came to Poggibonsi and visited Luchesio. They had met before when Francis was a merchant. Francis was delighted to see how Luchesio had changed his ways. Luchesio had heard about Francis and so he asked him to instruct him and his wife so that they might lead a life in the world that would be pleasing to God. It was then that Francis explained to them his plan for lay people. Luchesio and Buonadonna asked to be received into this way of life immediately. Thus, according to tradition, Luchesio and Buonadonna became the first members of the Order of Penance which later came to be called the Third Order of St Francis and is now known as the Secular Franciscan Order.

There are many stories told about this holy couple who continued to do many more charitable works so that many people came to them and received the help they needed. After Luchesio and Buonadonna put on the grey habit of the Tertiaries, they rapidly advanced towards holiness. They practiced many austerities, spent time at prayer and gained a reputation for holiness.

The story is told of Luchesio that when a plague broke out in Poggibonsi, he went out with his donkey loaded with food to give to those who were sick. When he did not have enough to supply everyone in need he begged for more from other people on behalf of the afflicted. He once saw a sick cripple sitting at the side of the road. He lifted him up on to his own shoulders and carried him to his home. On his way, he met a young man who mocked him. He said, "What poor devil is it you are carrying on your back?"

Luchesio gave him an answer saying, “I am carrying my Lord Jesus Christ.” At this the young man cried out and was struck dumb. Finding himself so punished he fell at the feet of Luchesio weeping. Luchesio took pity on him and restored his speech with a sign of the cross.

Luchesio became ill and he knew it was time for him to receive the reward for his good works. Buonadonna implored him to pray that she might die with him so that they may be together. Luchesio prayed and his wife also became ill and died before he did. He died on the 28th of April 1260, the day we celebrate his feast. It was not long before many miracles began to take place at his tomb and the continual veneration of the faithful led to his beatification by Pope Pius VI in 1694.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What lesson do you think we can learn from the lives of these two Saints?
- What did you notice about the conversion of each of these two holy people? Was there anything that you feel you can share with them in your own “conversion” to the Franciscan way of life?
- What role do you think the Holy Spirit had in their conversion?

PART THREE:

THE EVOLUTION OF

THE SECULAR FRANCICAN ORDER

RULE

Lesson 12: THE "PRIMITIVE" RULE: MEMORIALE PROPOSITI

Introduction:

If we are going to do something over a period of time, we usually plan. For example, if I am going to go on a long holiday, I will first sit down and plan where I would like to go and how long I would like to spend at a particular place. In the same way, any organization must have a plan of action: what they are there for and what they want to do. The Third Order of St Francis took over a plan that had been worked out and that they adapted to their own needs. This plan was produced by Cardinal Hugolino and it is called the *Memoriale propositi*[14].

What is the *Memoriale propositi*?

The term *"Propositum"*, used in the title and in the preceding legislative text, means "resolution", "proposal", "plan of life." The *Memoriale* reproduces the practices and the duties prescribed in the course of the centuries by Bishops and Popes for members of the Order of Penitents, such as, fasts, abstinences, long prayers, etc. and these are partially reported in the texts of other groups of Penitents. But something entirely new is added to this text: a novitiate, a profession of the Rule and a complete organization into Fraternity.

There were, therefore, a number of outward practices, without any spiritual exhortations or explanation of the Gospel as was contained in the *Propositi* of the *Humiliati.*

Where, then, was the Franciscan inspiration of this group nourished by the preaching and life of St Francis and his friars?

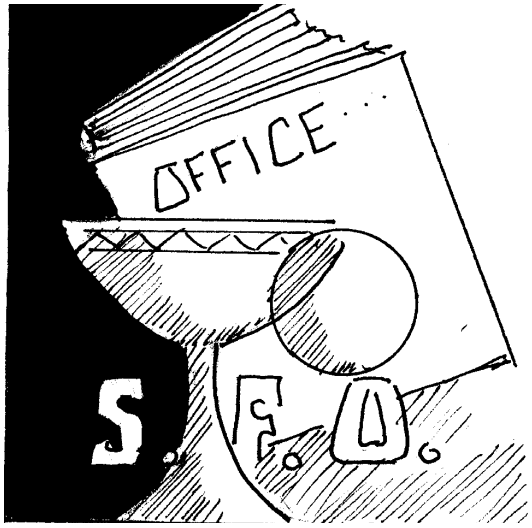
There is another source of inspiration in an addition made to the *Memoriale* in the course of the years. It says, "The Visitator and Ministers of this Fraternity ask the Minister or custos of the Friars Minor for a Friar Minor of the friary. This friar will advise the Fraternity and the Fraternity will be governed and directed in everything according to the wishes of the Fraternity. And if this brother is changed to another friary, they must ask for another to take his place, in such a way that this Fraternity founded by St Francis will be always directed with advice of the Friar Minor.

It is easy to understand the importance of this request. The First Order is still close to its origins. Some friars who knew St Francis or his first companions were still alive. The breath of that Franciscan springtime was still present. These friars were still the living echo of the evangelical word of Francis. So, it was from them that the juridical text of the *Memoriale* was evangelized and made Franciscan. Franciscan life was given to these Penitents. On the other hand, this addition will pass into the text of the re-worked *Propositi* which, in turn, will become the Rule approved officially by Nicholas IV in 1289.

The *Memoriale propositi*[15] of 1221 with its human spirit and attention to situations was open to a greater number of workers, married or single. Many joined groups of Penitents. Some were attracted by Francis' example, his witness to the radical following of the Gospel; others were attracted not only by the Gospel ideals presented, but also by the image of spiritual fraternal life which was offered by the *Memoriale* given to the Fraternity. The characteristic traits could be summed up as:

- A personalized community
- Self-governing
- Very active
- Socially influential
- Leading to holiness

[14] See Appendix 1 for the text of this document.
[15] In future reference to this I will simply call it the "Memoriale" for the sake of convenience.



Some historians have noted that Franciscan groups of laity presented themselves as authentic, united, fraternal communities. The Fraternity was not an empty show, but it pointed to a spiritual life. The articles of the Rule that they observed demonstrate an intense fraternal life. Also the text itself bears a notable fraternal resemblance in its use of the term "Fraternity", which was repeated many times: Fraternity – 7 times; Brothers and Sisters – 19 times.

The **spirit of Fraternity** showed through **liturgy** carried out in common (Office and Eucharist), weekly visits to the sick – 22; assistance to brothers and sisters who were in need – 22; bringing about peace between members – with recourse to the bishop, if necessary – 26; defending some brothers and sisters who were victims of public powers – 27; the death of a brother or a sister was also a time when fraternal care was shown when the community gathered to pray together and also after the funeral – 23. Finally, activities about which we have spoken reveal a deep **fraternal bond amongst the members**. We must not forget the basis on which the community was built. Without doubt, it was the evangelical spirit of St Francis.

Each community was **self-governing**: Ministers were chosen from among the brothers and sisters. The Ministers received new members after having examined them, admitted them with a ceremony of entrance into the Fraternity (clothing), admitted them to profession of the Rule; convoked members to meetings. The Minister was also responsible for the organizing service to the sick, assisting poor brothers and sisters and other works of helping the Fraternity e.g. burying brothers and sisters who died, defending members in their fidelity to the Church and the Rule; seeing to peace in the Fraternity amongst the brothers and sisters and others; finally, the minister was responsible for the good reputation of the community. Also the Minister was to invite a priest religious to preach to them.

Discussion Questions

- Discuss how these early groups of penitents lay the foundation to the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order today.
- What characteristics of those early communities do you think were the most important for them?
- What are the good and bad aspects of this early document?

LESSON 13: THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE MEMORIALE

Let us look at some of the things that are said about the *Memoriale propositi:*

1. The *Memoriale* is written in a legal form so we need to look beneath the words to see what the spirituality behind the words is. If we examine the juridical form of its external practices, we can see a link to the Gospel. There is a spirit of conversion and making a change in one's way of living, a *metanoia.* This can be seen in penances, fasts, abstinences (7 – 11), frugality in eating and drinking (6), simplicity in dress (1 – 4), the flight from worldly festivity (5) that are laid down. Surely, this is a translation of the Gospel words *"Repent and do penance!"* into daily life!

2. The distribution of the goods of the Fraternity and giving alms to the poor (20), as well as simplicity in their way of dressing, tended to the practice of poverty, so that a certain number of them managed to distribute what they had when they entered the Fraternity. All this asceticism had to help the penitent towards daily conversion and so fix their attention, little by little, on Jesus Christ. In this way, one would become more adapted to Fraternal life to which all are invited by the Rule and make one more available to others.

3. A life of prayer is kept alive by being with Christ, daily life within the family, in work and social relationships (7, 12, 18). Liturgical and sacramental life demanded by the Rule (15, 21) lead one to participate in the mystery of the life of Christ. Francis would have liked more frequent reception of the sacraments, according to Mariano of Florence. The Word of God preached in missions keeps the Christian on the way of penance and conversion and encourages (the Latin says "strengthens") works of mercy (social action of that time). These two activities are clearly expressed in the *Memoriale* (21).

4. These directives, such as reference to the bishop [repeated at least 3 times (26, 27, 32)] seem to indicate a wish to maintain an ecclesial life. The whole of this spiritual life boils down to a life of charity (20, 22), service, mercy, and peace (15, 16, 26) carried out through imitation and encouragement (21) and, at the same time, through warnings and corrections. (34, 35).

To conclude our consideration of the spirituality of this document, let us note two observations:

(1) If we read the document thoroughly and synthesize its practices, it seems that it contains four sources that nourished the Christian community and which made them so attractive: The Acts of the Apostles tells us about the new converts "*They spent their time learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers." (Acts 2:42)* These same things were happening in these communities, so these sources supply all those who profess this Franciscan life of penance;

(2) Around the austere character that strikes you as you read the *Memoriale*, one must note its human and understanding aspects which confer a touch of Franciscan sensitivity. We see this in its close attention to persons, it considers the sick when talking about fasting and abstinence, also the weak and pilgrims, future mothers, etc., attentive also to family life.

We could say, then, that the *Memoriale* and the *Letter to All the Faithful* have outlined the particular structures of the Third Order and have been the source of a number of activities and have had a social influence over the years.

Discussion Questions

- The early Penitents had a sense of "conversion". They wanted to make amends for past wrongs and change the direction of their lives. How would this apply today to members of the Secular Franciscan Order?

- What practical ways can we show our true conversion to Christ?

- How important is prayer in your family? Does it receive enough attention at Fraternity meetings or not? How could we improve this?

- The Secular Franciscan Order is not a religious Order in miniature as some had considered it in earlier days. In what ways could we express this in our daily lives?

LESSON 14: THE LIFESTYLE OF THE EARLY PENITENTS

Before we begin our study of the evolution of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, we should consider how the members of the Third Order lived in the time of St Francis.

We know that the lifestyle of the early tertiaries followed the pattern that other groups of penitents had followed: They lived in their own homes and carried out their work in the society in which they lived. They continued to carry out works of charity while keeping to the various penitential practices laid down. While some joined the penitents to escape their situation in life, such as wealthy women who wanted to escape a life of indulgence, violence and intrigue that existed in royal circles, others found the answer to their prayers in a way of life presented by St Francis that would help them come closer to God with a definite spirituality. Many formed into small groups and began a common life of devotion and fellowship while continuing on in their secular lives.

The influence of the tertiaries was felt in many ways. Some took up the role of administrators and positions of trust; others were involved in charitable works assisting the poor and the sick, those who were outcasts of society, such as prostitutes. Their involvement in public life was sure to bring about certain tensions with civil authorities. One of these was their refusal to be involved in wars, their refusal to take the Oath of Loyalty and their commitment to non-violence. The Church took up the cause of the tertiaries and even Pope Gregory IX urged the bishops to protect penitents from civil authorities who were demanding military service and taking of oaths.[16]

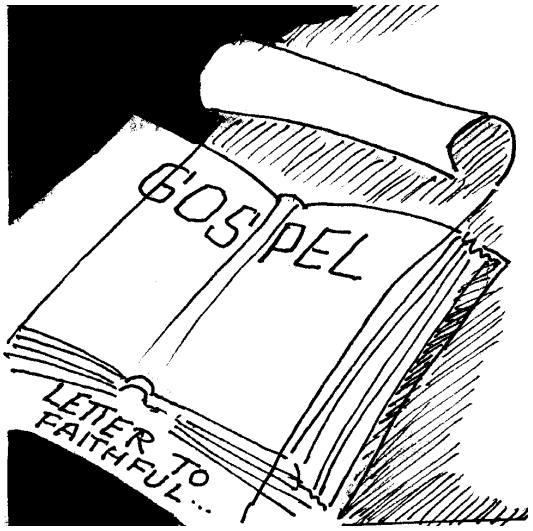
The conflict of tertiaries with civil authority also affected their relationship with the Friars. When John Parenti was the Minister General (1227 – 1232) the Friars Minor willingly guided the tertiaries; but when Brother Elias became Minister General (1232 – 1239) he refused to let the friars take this responsibility. This could have been because the friars did not want to become involved in defending the penitents, or because it brought them into conflict with the local secular clergy. This estrangement was ended in about 1284 when the legal connection between the Friars Minor and the Order of Penance became closer and the penitential groups embraced the Franciscan ideals.[17] But despite the conflict, vast numbers volunteered to join the penitential movement from their need to follow a spiritual ideal, as we saw earlier.

Discussion Questions

- Consider how God used this new movement to bring about great changes in the society of the time of St Francis. What changes did you note in the description we have here?
- What things do you find still apply today in the Secular Franciscan Order?
- Can you suggest ways that the Secular Franciscan Order could be more effective in the society in which we live?

[16] Karecki & Wroblewski, *Franciscan Study Guide,* op. cit.
[17] ibid.

LESSON 15: FRANCIS' EXHORTATIONS TO THE THIRD ORDER OF ST FRANCIS



There are two writings of St Francis called *The Letter to All the Faithful* which were certainly the life-giving spirit of the text of the *Memoriale.* In those writings we find Gospel attitudes typical of St Francis: humility, mercy, pardon, patience, great charity (All these are present also in the Rule of the Humiliati of 1201). It is also full of citations from the New Testament. One could say that it was the interior inspiration for the outward practices of the *Memoriale.*

There are two ***Letters to all the Faithful*** *that* have reached us. Recent studies have shown that these are not two versions of the same letter (as the scholar Kajetan Esser claimed). They are simply called the Early Exhortation and the Later Exhortation to all the Faithful. The first letter was described by Kajetan Esser, OFM in the following way: "There is so much of Francis and his friars offered in this document. Effectively, it constitutes the kernel of the Gospel, the core of a life according to the form of the holy Gospel." Thus, insofar as it regards the origin of the Secular Franciscan Order under every aspect, this document is worthy of the most attentive consideration. In the last edition of the writings of St Francis, the author entitled it *"Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance."* One understands, then, why it was placed as the prologue of the Rule approved by Paul VI.

The later Exhortation could be considered as a development of the first. In the conclusion of his study of this document, Esser says, "Francis demanded from his disciples, without any compromise, as much as Christianity has radically in itself against nature…At the basis of this he places the Spirit of the Lord, that is, they should think, will, live and act according to the Gospel. This way of living is truly *metanoia* (conversion), carrying out penance as Francis would do. This writing also – no matter who it was directed to – could be taken as the authentic foundation of any life or ideal of the Third Order, and above all, for its actual renewal."

And following a line on "reciprocity of life" among the three Orders, Esser noted, "The form of Franciscan life that must unite the Friars Minor, the Poor Women and the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, has rarely been presented in a clear way, its breadth and depth, as it has been presented in this letter." Another famous Franciscan author, Cuthbert, wrote in 1912, "It is precisely in this letter that one will discover the Rule of the Tertiaries."

Discussion Questions

- What role do you see that "conversion" has in the life of Secular Franciscans?
- Why do you think St Francis placed so much stress on this process of conversion?

LESSON 16: THE RULES OF INNOCENT IV AND NICHOLAS IV

Introduction:

There were a number of stages in the evolution of the Third Order as we have it today. This evolution can be traced through the biographies of St Francis and particularly through the evolution of the Third Order Rule.

The Rule of Innocent IV (1289)[18]

We noted earlier that the *Memoriale* of 1221 was used by the early Fraternities as the basis and guide for their lifestyle. It had never been formally approved by the Church. The Fraternities had the faculty of modifying the articles of the *Memoriale* and this included calling upon the assistance of the Friars Minor. This was the case until 1289 when the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV officially approved the new Rule.

The new Rule was not really "new" at all. It more or less presented the whole of the old *Memoriale,* but it was reorganized and edited so that it was more logical in its presentation. It was composed of 60 articles which were divided into 24 chapters. There were three distinct parts: Firstly, Entrance into the Order and formation (1 – 13); secondly, the way of living (14 – 42); and lastly, Life in fraternity with the service of the Ministers and the Visitator (42 – 60).

There were, however, some changes. The most important of them are:

a. The faculty to modify the articles of the *Memoriale* was suppressed;

b. It added an obligation to ask the First Order for an instructor;

c. They were to ask the First Order for a Visitator every year who was a Friar Minor.

d. It also added the mention of St Francis as the "founder" of this form of life.

Note that having an instructor and a Visitator did not affect the autonomy of the Third Order because some delegates from the whole of Italy attended the General Chapter of the Order held in 1289 which produced some Constitutions.

The asceticism, spirituality and organization of the Third Order remained unchanged. The text was still animated by the spirit of St Francis which continued to help the spiritual life of many Christians for centuries. The Fraternities remained a source of humility, constant charity, and holiness.

Let us recall that in the earlier times before St Francis, there were a great number of lay people who aspired to lay spirituality and wanted an active evangelical life in works of mercy. To express these desired concretely, they grouped themselves into self-directed associations. In this way, the old Order of Penitents was revived and self-organized.

Then Francis came on the scene. The Spirit led him to discover the way of the Gospel which he embraced totally and lived in such a radical way that the penitential movement we just mentioned saw in him the answer to what they were seeking. Many groups of penitents and others vanished but Francis and his movement remained.

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[18] See Appendix 2 for the text of this document.

The *Memoriale* which these Christians had taken as their Rule and the responsibilities that they took upon themselves by their profession as well as the spirit of St Francis which animated their lives created in them and in their Fraternities a Gospel mentality that guided their action and made them a good influence in the society of the 13th century in which they lived.

The **Rule of Nicholas IV (1289)**[19] followed the *Memoriale Propositi* closely but an important addition is that the Pope named Francis as the "Founder of the Order"; called for Visitators to be Friars Minor and the penitents were given an active role in the repression of heresy which was the main thrust of his bull. However, Nicholas failed to include the biblical spirit of the two Exhortations. However, this Rule gave a great impetus to those Third Order members who wanted to follow a common life.[20]

Discussion Questions

- The evolution of the Rule was slow. What important changes did you note in these two Rules and the *Memoriale propositi*?

- What advantages did the Third Order of that time gain from the Rule of Nicholas IV?

- How do they affect us today?

[19] See Appendix 3 for the text of this document.
[20] Karecki & Wroblewski, op. cit. See also pp. 36ff of this Unit.

LESSON 17: THE RULE OF LEO XIII

Introduction:

We noted above that the Rule of 1289 did not take away anything from the substance of the *Memoriale* so what has been said about the latter can equally be said about the Rule of 1289. There are, however, a number of remarks we should note before we consider the contribution of Leo XIII.

1) The Third Order developed over the centuries. Some tertiaries formed into communities of men. These took the Third Order Rule but also took solemn vows (or perpetual vows) and a Rule derived from the 1289 Rule of Nicholas IV and which Leo X approved in 1521. This is the Third Order Regular which we shall consider later in this Unit.

2) Again, in the 19th century, numerous women congregations arose which were inspired by the spirit of St Francis and took the Rule of Leo X, and so they attached themselves morally or juridically, according to each particular case, to the Franciscan Family. Pius XI adapted this Rule to the new historical circumstances in 1927. In practice, now another Rule is in force from Paul VI. We shall also consider this briefly later.

Some Historical Circumstances

In order to give a clearer account of how the Third Order members lived their lives in the 20th century, we can distinguish three aspects: social, religious, and a time of renewal.

1) The Social Aspect

Let us begin with the last part of the 19th century under the impulse of Leo XIII. His encyclical *"Auspicato"* of 1882 he pointed out the direction he wanted the Third Order to take. He said that the basis of the Third Order could be found in the general law of the Gospel. He recognized the many good works that came from the Third Order for a better social life. Now he wanted to use the Third Order to continue this social work and to protect the rights of the Church and bring about social reform. The Pope re-wrote the Third Order Rule to this end.[21]

We have stressed the reference to the Gospel. Leo XIII based the life of the tertiaries and the works they were to do on the Gospel. Congresses were held in Europe especially in France and Italy where religious priests and tertiaries were organized. But there were divisions in France in 1897 mainly over financial matters. Pope Leo XIII settled these by insisting on obedience to the Vicar of Christ "even in his counsels and exhortations"; and also, on fraternal harmony and unity. But the Pope was ignored.

The Third Order found its own sense of organization and self-government on the provincial and national levels and constituted itself into federations. Together with these activities, they found a growth in the number of vocations especially among men. But this social, federal movement was stopped by World War I. Even before this, Pope Pius X issued his letter on the Third Order of St Francis[22] in 1912. In this letter, he questioned the social activities of the Third Order and again placed it under the supervision of the First Order as well as its organization and presidency.[23]

So, at the beginning of the 20th century, there were two opposing tendencies: that of the individualist; and that of the social approach (as in the Church). This was expressed at the International Congress in 1900.

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[21] For text of Leo XIII's Rule, see Appendix 4.
[22] Pope Pius X, Letter *"Tertium Franciscalium Ordinem,* 8 September 1912.
[23] Some historians hold that the First Order was not prepared for this turnaround from "director" to become "formator", educator and companion. (Bedrune, Leone)

2) The Religious Aspect

After World War I there was a strong tendency for the Third Order to define its identity as "religious life in the world." This created a great deal of confusion. Some wonder if this was the result of Pius X's letter. It was at this time that there was a decline in the number of male vocations to the Third Order while women Fraternities grew. In this same period, Catholic Action came into being. Some say the Third Order had a distorted image of itself which needed to be corrected through renewal. They did not realize their place in the Church, and this was attributed to the new Code of Canon Law which was published at this time. It placed them amongst the associations of the laity. As a result, they became simply pious groups. Again, this was a misinterpretation of the Code which remained until only recent times.

3) The Period of Renewal

This renewal was manifested after 1940. It came about through groups reflecting on the nature of the Third Order and their Franciscan origin. These reflections led to the rediscovery of the Franciscan charism which, in turn, led to the place of the Gospel in the life of the Fraternity – in their meetings and in their formation.

Renewal first manifested itself in the change of vocabulary which reflected the secular character of the Third Order, and the custom of calling the Order "secular" was introduced. As a consequence, they soon began speaking about the self-government of the Fraternity. The Father "Director" was gradually stripped of his very high authority. Later he was called the "Spiritual Assistant."

Further study of the Franciscan charism revealed the meaning that stood out in the Fraternity in the time of St Francis. From that time, the name "Fraternity" was often used as in the 13th century instead of "sodality" or "congregation" which was adopted in official documents. The misunderstood term "Director" was changed to "Counsellor" which was more adapted to the language of our day. In studying the charism, the importance of poverty was brought to the attention of all, and in speaking of this, the terms "division" or "participation" expressed the idea of "stripping" in a way more adapted to the charism than the "duty of giving" or the use of the word "quota."

The renewal also revealed the shape of the Order. A sociological analysis revealed a strong decrease in the percentage of men members with a strong increase in the number of women members in the Order. There was also a higher number of older members.

It was at this time, too, that there was a greater interest in "going back to the sources" of Franciscan life in the time of Francis and why he took an interest in the laity. The rediscovery of the secular nature of the Fraternity and the vision of the Order as composed of many Fraternities without external bonds of communion and without any relationship among themselves urged the commissary fathers of the provinces to form various provincial councils and then a national council. There was one in France in 1894 and in Italy in 1935 at the time when experiments were circulating. They exchanged experiences with those of the youth, with families and had days of formation. To some extent, they rediscovered the federative lives from the beginning of the century and at the end of the 13th century. The bond would finish up with its extension to all nations. Finally, the government and effective presidency would return to the tertiaries.

Conclusion

The study of the Gospels, the development of the sense of Fraternity including all men and women led to a new consciousness that led them to discover their responsibilities towards extreme poverty and, at the same time, their duty to move and fight to bring about a remedy. The 1957 General Constitutions concentrated its attention on the obligation of tertiaries in this field (art. 74). The papal documents on social and political questions should have been studied (art. 75). There was therefore an indicator for formation in any case for councils to become more sensitive to the needs of the Fraternity. On this point, the national and provincial councils presented notable assistance.

Finally, this approach to the activities of the tertiaries became an obligation in a new Rule for which work began and lasted twelve years before the final Rule of Paul VI was approved.

Discussion Questions

- Note the changes of approach in the development of the Third Order since the time of Leo XIII. What were these developing views?

- What were the good and not so good aspects of this development in your opinion?

- How do you see this as preparing the ground for Pope Paul VI's Rule?

LESSON 18: THE RULE OF PAUL VI

Introduction:

This Rule is the fruit of a long evolution. The Third Order continued to develop after the First World War, and really moved ahead after the Second World War and particularly the Second Vatican Council. Consultations began in 1966 in various nations and demanding work continued for the next twelve years. It was a particular advantage to have the tertiaries involved in the consultation. Again, resources were much better as the writings of St Francis were available, his biographies and other source material. The Rule that resulted was approved by Paul VI on the 24th of June 1978 on the feast of St John the Baptist. This was also symbolic as St John the Baptist was venerated by St Francis as John the Baptist was a penitent, a prophet and the precursor of the Lord.

Many commentaries have been written on this Rule. Here we give a simple summary presentation that we hope will reveal its originality compared to the previous Rules. This Rule appears to respond to the questions of Christians today.[24]

Some Observations on the Pauline Rule:

The Prologue to the Rule should not be overlooked. It was probably, according to Kajetan Esser O.F.M., the original instruction given to his first lay followers. Esser says that this was an instruction he addressed to persons who had embraced the penitential movement which Francis himself and his fraternity were closely tied and associated. The letter was not addressed to his Friars Minor but to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their own houses and had received a form of life from Francis.

This Letter to All the Faithful represents the teachings which Francis gave to Penitents from the beginning of his itinerant preaching. This letter existed some years before 1221 and shows that Francis was deeply interested in the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. He was sympathetic to their desires to lead a life of penance. This is clear in the fact that he was willing to give them a Rule or form of life and follow their development.

The Prologue forms a fitting preparation in our reading of the Rule of Paul VI which simply expands on the ideas expressed by Francis in his letter: Conversion, Gospel life, worship, etc. are explained more fully in Chapter Two of the Rule.[25]

The Rules that went before were practical in character, telling tertiaries what they were expected to do. The language was legal in form. There were practically no exhortations except to promote harmony in the Fraternity. Beneath all these practices, we had to find what lay behind the words of the law to discover the spirit that gave them life. Paul VI's Rule, on the other hand, does not lay down any definite practices except, perhaps, the thorough reading of the Gospel, but it left the frequency up to each fraternity. However, it is clear that Chapter 2 is full of the Gospel and Franciscan spirit.

The Pauline Rule inspires new ideas, attitudes, and actions. The secular Franciscan is nourished with these ideas inspired by the Gospel and the Rule presents guidelines to put these ideas into practice in various circumstances that come up.

It is clear that the Pauline Rule is highly inspirational in character. It inspires one to meditation just as the Rule of St Francis does for his friars. The Rule is so full of ideas that one never finishing profiting from it. It constantly provokes us to action so that we are never finished living according to the Spirit. And, in this case, the Spirit is the parent of love.

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[24] Cf. Bedrune, Leone op. cit.

[25] See what was said earlier in this Unit on the two Exhortations (Letters) to All the Faithful, pp.15ff.

When we compare the Pauline Rule with the previous ones, we find that **earlier ones laid down what was to be done by the tertiaries in the life of the Fraternity.** There were certain prohibitions, such as the carrying of arms, taking oaths, etc. and there was no reference to Jesus Christ, nor to the Gospels, except the citing of Lk 21:34 *"Be on your guard! Don't let yourselves be too occupied with feasting and drinking and with the worries of this life, or that Day may suddenly catch you like a trap."*[26]

The text of the Pauline Rule refers to the Gospel and the writings of St Francis and Council documents and there is frequent reference to the Father, to Jesus Christ, to the Holy Spirit and to St Francis.

Note the change in approach that we find in the Pauline Rule: There is greater stress on **the interior nature of the SFO**. Earlier Rules had been more legalistic, looking at external practices and organization. Paul VI sought to express the interior spirit of the SFO Rule, which is one of conversion, turning to God and, at the same time, building up relationships within the Franciscan Family.

This does not mean to say that the Third Order prior to the Second Vatican Council was ineffective. It was a powerful force in the Church and had many saintly followers, such as St Elizabeth of Hungary, St Louis, King of France – both of these saints being patrons of the SFO. St Margaret of Cortona and St Pope Pius X as well as many others prove the effectiveness of the Third Order in leading to holiness. However, the Order has often called for renewal and keeping up with the times and has always gained a new vitality through these changes.

Paul VI's Rule set out a vision of Gospel life and values to be lived out in our contemporary secular post-Vatican world. It pointed out a life of conversion of heart to the love of God and neighbour to be lived out in the world by Secular Franciscans in full union with the Catholic Church and sharing its mission as part of the Franciscan Family.

Let us return again to consider the structure of the Pauline Rule:

From the outline above, the structure of the Rule is clear. Firstly, there is a Prologue which consists in Francis' *Letter to All the Faithful* which has been commented on above. It has the title *"Exhortation of Brother Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance".* One thing that one can't help noticing is the Franciscan flavour of the letter. It has been noted that the letter "is both a summary of Franciscan gospel living and an immediate contact with the model and inspiration for observing the gospel – Francis himself."[27]

Discussion Questions

- What do you see as the "new spirit" in the Rule of Paul VI?
- How is this approach different from previous Rules?
- How should we adjust in our thinking in line with the new spirit of the Rule? List your priorities.

[26] This is the text of the 1289 Rule, art. 19.
[27] *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order – with a catechism and instruction,* Franciscan Herald Press, 1981

LESSON 19: MODERN CHALLENGES TO THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER

Introduction

The spirituality of the SFO is reflected in the General Constitutions of the SFO which are the authoritative statement of the Order on how to apply the SFO Rule to Gospel living. The General Constitutions are an instrument or structure which help to make Gospel life come alive for secular Franciscans by giving concrete expression of how to live the SFO Rule. In other words, the General Constitutions tell us what it means to belong to the Secular Franciscan Order.

When the General Constitutions were published, the minister general, Emanuela D'Annunzio, issued a letter which explained how the General Constitutions should be read and interpreted. She pointed out that we could consider the General Constitutions under three different aspects which I prefer to call "Challenges" that need to be faced:

1. The Unity of the SFO

2. The Secularity of the SFO; and

3. The Autonomy of the SFO

The SFO is described in the Rule as "an organic union of all the Catholic Fraternities scattered around the whole world" (art. 2). The General Constitutions say, "The International Fraternity identifies itself with the totality of the SFO" (GG.CC art. 69.1). We are not simply looking at theoretical approach here but at practical ways to build unity of the SFO. It is not enough to speak of the "splendid gift of the Holy Spirit", but what do we do with this "authentic treasure" as Paul VI has called it?

The first requirement is our own "conversion" - a change of heart and mind; but remember, it is the Spirit who encourages us and brings about unity. Our unity is supported by mutual love and deepened by training and guaranteed by the ministry of the brothers and sisters and assisted by the brothers of the First Order and Third Order Regular.

But again, secular Franciscans must come to an awareness of their responsibilities. Pope Leo XIII exhorted the SFO (then known as the Third Order of St Francis) to join forces and not keeping separate according to different obediences viz. OFM's, OFM Caps, OFM Conv or the TOR. "There must be a "Union of the SFO as a characteristic present in its practical and organizational plan."[28]

While this still remains on the idealistic level today, it is something that all members of the SFO must strive for with the help of the Spiritual Assistants from the different obediences, and these friars should encourage members of the SFO to work for structural change and genuine unity within the Secular Franciscan Order. For example, it has been suggested that Spiritual Assistance as well as accompaniment be shared as a step in the right direction.

We can be thankful that the first sign of true unity already exists: the SFO Rule which everyone accepts as the idea to strive after. We find this ideal presented in the Prologue to the Rule in the *Letter to All the Faithful.* It outlined a "norm of life" consisting in the five following elements:

- Love of God;
- Love of neighbour;
- Opposition to the spirit of the flesh, to sinful trends and to evil;
- Celebration of the sacraments, particularly, the sacrament of Reconciliation and the Eucharist;
- To work in all that leads to conversion.

Questions for Discussion

[28] cf. Rodondo, OFM Conv., Valentin, *"The Secular Franciscan Order"* in *Koinonia,* 1998 - 2

- How do the different “obediences” affect the way we operate in our Fraternity?
- How could we improve our situation?

LESSON 20: THE FIRST MAJOR CHALLENGE: UNITY OF THE SFO

Under the topic of Unity, we could consider it under three aspects:
a) Franciscan Family
b) Fraternity
c) Context with the whole Church

We already treated FRANCISCAN FAMILY in Lesson 3 on pages 3ff. Let us, therefore, look at the next two aspects which could be treated together: Fraternity living in the context of the Church.

Fraternity and the Franciscan Family in the Church

We should ask ourselves "Why did we join the Secular Franciscan Order?" We must admit we joined the Order, on one level, to serve God and we do this as a fraternity, in a relationship with one another to support one another. Fraternity is also an expression of our love and it is a source of our accountability to each other.

On another level, we live our Franciscan life in the context of the Franciscan Family. We all share the Franciscan charism together with other members of the Franciscan Family, whether we are religious or lay people. It is important to note that we, together, make present the life-giving charism of Francis and Clare in the life and mission of the Church. So, on another third level, we live our life within the whole Church. This could also be considered on the local level of the diocese, or on the level of the world-wide Church. We are not Franciscans for our own sake, but for the sake of the Church. Therefore, our union with the Church is absolutely vital for us to realize our Franciscan vocation.[29] In fact, the whole concept of cooperation and collaboration with the Church is built into the General Constitutions.

Discussion Questions

- How can we show ourselves as true "brothers" or "sisters" to each other in practice?
- What are some ways that we could show our vital connection with other members of the Franciscan Family?
- What do you understand by our "unity" with the whole Church to mean?
- What are some practical ways that we could show the unity of our Fraternity and the Secular Franciscan Order to others?

[29] Cf. Benet Fonck, O.F.M., video talks on the SFO Constitutions.

LESSON 21: THE MYSTERY OF CHURCH COMMUNION

Referring back to the image of the vine and the branches, Jesus' words *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-dresser…Abide in me and I in you."*[30] It is these words that show the mystery of *communion*, Christ united to his disciples. This oneness is a consequence of the oneness of the Blessed Trinity. Jesus went on to pray that might be one *"even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you."*[31]

This idea had been developed at the 2nd Vatican Council. The word **"communion"** basically speaks about our union with God, brought about by Jesus in the Spirit. This communion can come about by reading the Word of God in the Scriptures, by receiving the Sacraments. Paul VI spoke of it as a "Communion of Saints," and that is what the Church really is.

There are many images that could describe this communion: sheepfold, flock, Holy City, the vine, spiritual house, and especially, Mystical Body. The Council suggested the term "People of God" to bring out that the Church is a kind of sacrament, a sign of intimate union with God, and unity among ourselves.

The Church as communion has been described by the Synod as "the 'new' People, the messianic people with the dignity and freedom of God's children, united through the constant presence of the Spirit whom they have all received."[32]

Communion in the Church has been compared to the union in a living, functioning body. Read the following passage from 1 Cor 12:12ff.

> *Christ is like a single body, which has many parts; it is still one body, even though it is made up of different parts. In the same way, all of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether slaves or free, have been baptized into the one body by the same Spirit, and we have all been given the one Spirit to drink.*
>
> *For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say, "Because I am not a hand, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, "Because I am not an eye, I don't belong to the body," that would not keep it from being a part of the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how could it hear? And if it were only an ear, how could it smell? As it is, however, God put every different part in the body just as he wanted it to be. There would not be a body if it were all only one part! As it is, there are many parts but one body.*

The body described here shows a functioning, vital diversity of parts, working together for the good of the whole body. Each part complements the other, though different in function. There is only one Spirit giving vitality to the body and gives gifts to the body. The first gift is grace; then unity strengthened by love which binds them together.

The Church is an organic communion, that is, analogous to a living body and operative. From this, two principles follow for the life of the Church and the identity of the lay faithful: Diversity and Complementarity or, we could say, Pluralism and Collaboration. These introduce us to speaking about the various ministries and charisms which will become the models for each of the faithful, from inside the Church in particular, within the parish and the various lay associations…. Every faithful lay person can offer his or her own contribution because God calls each one by name to a mission in the Church and the world.

From this we can see the importance of discovering one's own vocation, of seeing also the new condition of life as a new call to an interior life of one's state in life that already exists. The exhortation dedicates one section on the method of such a process. (58) Each one is given a task that can't be substituted or delegated to someone else. (cf. 28) "Each one lives according to the grace received." (Cf. 1 Pet 4:10).

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[30] Jn 15:1, 4
[31] Jn 17:21
[32] Grail, simplified version of *Christifideles laici, op. cit., p. 27*

Remember, it is the Spirit who instructs and guides the Church with different gifts, hierarchical and charismatic. One tends to forget that the service of the apostles and the service of authority are pure gifts conceded by the Spirit, within and or the ecclesial community.

This image is very helpful for understanding the workings of the Fraternity. The various characteristics described here apply equally to members of the Fraternity who should keep this text in mind.

- How would you apply this lesson to our daily living?
- In what ministries are we involved in our parish?
- What lessons can we learn from this for our Fraternity?

LESSON 22: MAJOR CHALLENGES: SECULARITY

Introduction

The meaning of the word "secularity" is "being in the world". In other words, the Church defines the SFO as "lay people living in the world." The name given to the Order is "Secular Franciscan Order" and its members are known as "Secular Franciscans". The emphasis is on both words "secular" and "Franciscan" which distinguish the Order. Paul VI describes members of the Order as "Members of Christ's Faithful People" which lends another insight to the title. The nature of the Order is expressed in the Rule which synthesizes its vocation, purpose, spirit, and mission in the world after the example of St Francis and St Clare – both of whom were co-founders of the Franciscan charism.

Note that the Pope described the Rule as "the gift of the Spirit" that leads to the Father. While the Holy Spirit is the eternal Source of every gift that comes from God in the order of creation… and the mystery of the Incarnation continues the fullness of this giving."[33]

Secularity could be expressed in three ways:

1) Your own identity. According to the traditional understanding of the term, you are an "Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance". Cf. Lesson 7 (above), p. 14.

2) The SFO complements the whole religious way of being Franciscan so that together they, both religious and lay, can really be for the Church and the Kingdom;

3) "Secular" and "laity" is a necessary responsibility to fulfil the life and mission of the Church, i.e., all the members of Christ's faithful.

Perhaps the best description of the identity of the secular Franciscan can be found in the exhortation *Christifideles Laici, 1988* which aims to clarify the vocation and mission of the lay faithful in the Church's communion and mission.

(1) THE IMAGE: THE PEOPLE OF GOD

This image of the Church is taken from the bible and is described in the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium.* The document describes what the Church is and what it is for. Right from the beginning of creation God had one people in mind to carry out his plan. This people were the chosen race or the Chosen People, the Jews (cf. Dt 7:8). Another image can be closely related to this image and that is the Church as the Body of Christ that St Paul has spoken about in his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 12:12-31). These are two understandings or images of the same reality, the People of God, looking from different angles, but one complementing the other. (It is interesting to note that the Greek word *laos* (people) in the New Testament means 'People of God'.) *Lumen Gentium* is supplemented by the document *Christifideles Laici* which was written many years later in 1988. It repeats the fact that now WE are the new People of God.

There are three conclusions that we can draw from these documents[34]:

i. 'People of God' does not distinguish between laity, religious and clergy, but People of God as a whole. All are members of the Church;
ii. All members of the Church are fundamentally equal – called and justified by Christ and sanctified by the Holy Spirit;
iii. The Church has become the People of God of the New Covenant.

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[33] SFO Rule, ch. 2, art. 4

[34] Cf. *Australian EJournal of Theology,* August 2005, article by Brian Gleeson CP, *"The Church as a People of God. A People in Communion"*

(2) THE IMAGE: THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES

> *I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. He breaks off every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and he prunes every branch that does bear fruit, so that it will be clean and bear more fruit. You have been made clean already by the teaching I have given you. Remain united to me, and I will remain united to you. A branch cannot bear fruit by itself; it can do so only if it remains in the vine. In the same way, you cannot bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine, and you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear a great deal of fruit; for you can do nothing without me…. Jn 15:1 - 4*

Again, Scripture uses the image of the vine and the branches to symbolize the mystery of the People of God. This was to bring out the fact that the laity is not merely workers in the vineyard, but they are part of it. The Old Testament called Israel God's vine, how own work, his heart's joy. Jesus uses the same symbol to describe different aspects of the kingdom of God. In John's Gospel, the vine symbolizes not only God's people but Jesus himself. He is the true vine, and we are grafted on to him and draw our life from him.

The 2 Vatican Council also describes the Church as the vine as a mystery because the life of the Trinity is freely offered to all the baptized who are called to live that oneness and unity of God and to communicate it to others.[35]

Later, in chapter 17, John says: *"You will know that I am in the Father and you in me, and I in you."* It is only from inside this mystery of union or communion, that we can describe the role of the laity in the Church and in the world.

The Church identifies the lay faithful with those who are baptized. Through baptism, they are given new life and become children of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. By baptism we are linked to each other as members of Christ. Peter adds that we become like living stones in the temple of the Holy Spirit filled with His presence. But all the faithful share in Christ's mission as prophet, priest, and king.

The Secular Character of the Laity

Because of their baptismal dignity, all the laity, priests, and religious share the responsibility for the Church's mission. But the laity especially, who live in the world continue Christ's work of saving humanity. The laity are called to work in the world around them in their ordinary occupations and relationships. The world becomes their place and means to fulfil their vocation. They become the salt and leaven to transform the world.

Thus, the Synod insisted that the word "secular" must be understood in the light of God's action. Men and women have been given the care of their world and share Christ's mission.

Everyone has been called to holiness and this is the primary vocation of the laity. The laity expresses this holiness by its involvement in the secular world and bringing the message of the Gospel to others by word and example.

Questions for Discussion

- What similarities or dissimilarities do you see in the two images of the Church as Body of Christ and People of God?
- The image of the Vine and the Branches has many very rich symbolic meanings. What are some of these meanings?
- How does the laity appear under this image?
- Explain the term "secular" in the name "Secular Franciscan Order".

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[35] *This is the Laity* (simplified version of Christifideles laici), Grail publication, Middx, 1989.

Reflection and Activity:

- Here are some of the texts suggested for reflection on this topic of Secularity or Identity:

The Gospel parable on which the exhortation is based is that of the landowner who goes out to find labourers for his vineyard (Mt 20:1 – 2). This parable highlights the missionary identity of the lay-faithful. The complementary text is Mt 5:13 – 14 “salt of the earth” and “light of the world”.

- Compare these with the following texts:

Gal 4:6; Rom 12:5; 1 Pet 2:5

The choice of these texts is to place the emphasis on dignity (sons of God), communion (one body) and on mission (living stones).

LESSON 23: THE IDENTITY OF THE SFO

Every human person is called to holiness and, in response to that call, every one has the right to follow his or her spiritual journey in communion with the Church. One of these spiritual highways is the Franciscan Family which recognizes Francis as Father, the inspiration and model of their way of life. From this point of view, Franciscanism is a way to holiness. It is the path God chose for you to achieve the gift of holiness. Note I said it is **a way** and not **the way** to holiness. Every person is called to a specific way to holiness as we saw in Lesson 2, p. 5 (above).

We need to ask what is this call to holiness in its broader perspective as the source of our call? How does that call shape our lives in that specific kind of way? The answer suggested by Benet Fonck, OFM [36] is that we are called in the same way that Francis of Assisi was called to holiness. The has gifted us to come to know the Lord in the same way that Francis did. Francis, then, is our father, our inspiration and model for all Franciscans.

The SFO describes itself as "secular", "Franciscan", "Order". We have already discussed the first two words, but what do we mean by "Order"? The answer to this could be very involved, but I shall try to keep it simple.

The General Constitutions describe the Secular Franciscan Order in this way: "(The SFO) is formed by the organic union of all the Catholic fraternities whose members, moved by the Holy Spirit, commit themselves through profession to live the Gospel in the manner of St Francis, in the secular state, following the Rule approved by the Church." In other words, it states the elements that make an Order are:

a) **Vocation** – One must have a call from God;
b) **Profession** – There must be a public profession of a Rule;
c) follow **a Rule of life** approved by the Church;
d) As "Franciscan", it is integrally and **intimately connected to the Franciscan religious** because, from the very beginning of our Franciscan history, the Secular Franciscans have been entrusted to the care of the First Order and the Third Order Regular for pastoral care and spiritual assistance.
e) We could add another element: **the SFO has its own proper identity within the whole Church**. Canon 303 of the Code of Canon Law says that all Third Orders are "public associations of the faithful" which have their own official identity (or "juridic personality") within the Church. It has its proper place in the Church and consequently, its own rights and responsibilities.

"The SFO is not just some amorphous group of good-intentioned people who have come together but it has the blessing and the sanction and help of the whole Church in all its levels to lead them, to support them and to challenge them to be faithful to the mission that they have been given by virtue of their vocation…."[37] The SFO has the right and responsibility to achieve its whole identity and to fulfil its mission.

The SFO vocation is very specific. It gives the unique form to your life and to your apostolate. It gives you a specific flavour to the very way you live and the way you fulfil your mission in the Church. There is a unique quality about this vocation so much so that the General Constitutions specify that anyone bound by profession to another spiritual family is excluded from membership in the SFO because the uniqueness of each of the spiritual families is so special that you can't fully fulfil your responsibilities and your rights by belonging to more than one family. This is impossible. Consequently, you cannot be a religious and an SFO at the same time because it would be impossible for you to be faithful to both at the same time. That is the beauty of so many spiritualities within the Church.

The "secular state" characterizes the spirituality and apostolic life of those who belong to the SFO. (SFO GG.CC art. 3) The role of the secular person is to build up the kingdom of God by one's presence in the life situation and activities of the secular world; or, in the case of SFO secular priests, "by offering to the

[36] Benet Fonck, OFM, op. cit.
[37] ibid.

people of God the service which is properly theirs, in communion with the bishop and the presbytery." (art. 3) All this is inspired from the initiative of St Francis of Assisi. This does not come from your choice but God's calling drawing you to deepen your commitment as a secular person and to do it from the perspective of the Franciscan way. Your witness of living the Gospel is not as you as an individual but living it in fraternity.

When we speak of the SFO as a vocation, we have a number of elements: a calling to live the Gospel in the spirit of St Francis, within the Church, in fraternity and within the world. All these form the context of defining and describing how you respond to the call to live the Gospel of Christ as an SFO.[38]

Discussion Questions

- What do we mean when we say that "the Franciscan way is not the only way to holiness"?
- Why is the SFO called an "Order"?
- Why can't a religious be a member of the SFO?
- Why does the Church emphasize the idea of "secular" in describing the SFO?
- What are the main elements in the SFO vocation?

[38] ibid.

LESSON 24: LIFE IN FRATERNITY

Here we shall consider life in Fraternity as a support system for Gospel life. We profess that we will live a Gospel life and we express it and bring it about through our life in Fraternity. In this sense, we view Fraternity like a sacrament of Gospel life. When Jesus prayed that we might all be one in Jn 17, he prayed that we might be one in our unity with each other, and through this experience in some way our unity with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Also, in our oneness, we can make known the fact that Jesus has come as Saviour and so our oneness in Fraternity can have a dual purpose. That is why we could call it a "sacramental sign" of Gospel living because it is where we experience, through our togetherness, the proclamation of God's presence to the world.[39]

In this context, we can see where leadership and mutual cooperation fits into our way of life, as well as the composition of our life in fraternity. John 17 is the model that we hold before ourselves.

> *"I pray that they all may be one, Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one. I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." (Jn 17:21 – 23)*[40]

Life in fraternity is modelled on this text. There must be a Gospel quality of life within our fraternities where union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters are promoted. Also, their action participation and action within the Church is evident. The actual participation and collaboration of the SFO within the Church happens when fraternities at various levels, - local, regional, national, or international – each with its specific personality in the Church, is connected one with the other on these various levels.

There is a responsibility of all the members of the fraternities by means of personal presence, in participation, by means of active collaboration, by means of praying together and witnessing together. For a fraternity on any level to be healthy, there are **five qualities that express this**: praying together, studying together, ministering together, sharing in conversation together and having fun together. These are the five qualities of a healthy fraternity.

We could add one more quality that is on the practical level. There has to be a contribution to the fraternity funds. This is clearly stated in the Rule and the Constitutions cf. art 25. The needs of the fraternity are placed in order of priority in terms of where the contributions of the fraternity go. The first is life in fraternity; second is the work of the fraternity and the liturgical needs of the fraternity; then the apostolic, charitable work in the Order. Life in fraternity applies to all levels: local, regional, national, and international.

Questions for Discussion

- Discuss the five qualities of a healthy fraternity. How do they apply to your fraternity?
- What do you understand by the statement "We live our Franciscan life in Fraternity?"
- In what sense can we speak of the fraternity as a support system?

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[39] Ibid.
[40] From *The Good News for Modern Man, Australian edition,1988*

LESSON 25: LEADERSHIP IN THE SFO

The General Constitutions speak of leadership in the fraternity in articles 31 and 32. In order to keep the fraternity alive and to continue on there is the possibility of leadership and change of leadership. The purpose of leadership is to animate and guide the members of the fraternity to realize their vocation and to bring about the mission of the Church. The ministry of leadership is not power nor authority but service for the sake of the mission. Leadership comes out that deep commitment of those who are permanently professed.

Leadership presumes deep commitment, a conviction of the validity of the Franciscan Gospel life. A leader must be attentive to a vision of life of the Church and society and who really knows what it means "to do penance" and to be a member of the Church in our contemporary society. A leader must be open to dialogue and ready to give and receive help and collaboration. He or she "should seek to inspire life and soul into the fraternities by their own witness, suggesting appropriate means for the development of the life of the fraternity and of apostolic activities in the light of the fundamental Franciscan options. He or she should see to it that the decisions made are carried out and he or she should promote collaboration among the brothers and sisters. These are the qualities of leadership outlined in the General Constitutions.[41]

This leadership, involving the minister and the council, must be involved in the preparation and animation of the meetings of the fraternity, whether in a spiritual or technical kind of way. They are also very much involved in giving inspiration by their own witness, motivating others by their example. This team of leaders must be committed to developing the Gospel way of life as well as the apostolic life of the members of the community.

Another aspect of leadership that should be stressed is that of executing decisions of the community, carrying them out and bringing about the fulfilment of goals that the community expects. Moreover, it is the responsibility of leadership to foster communion, peace, and reconciliation within the community.

Questions for Discussion

- List the qualities of leadership that have been outlined above. Discuss each one and indicate how well they are being fulfilled.
- Why do you think commitment is an essential quality of a leader?
- In what way do you see the role of creativity in leadership?
- What dangers do you see in the task of leadership? How can they be overcome?

[41] SFO General Constitutions, art. 31

LESSON 26: THE THIRD CHALLENGE: THE AUTONOMY OF THE SFO

We must understand, first of all, that "autonomy" does not mean "independence". We say the SFO is "autonomous" which means that it has its own personality, its own rights and responsibilities and collaboration together. "Autonomous", therefore, implies that you, as professed members of the SFO, have your own responsibilities for developing your spirituality, fraternity, and mission. This is your domain. Nothing that First Order can do will change that. We cannot live your vocation. That is what you must do. You are responsible for your own spiritual development, your life in fraternity and the fulfilment of your mission.[42]

Fr Patrick Colbourne OFM Cap point out in his article on *The Autonomy and Unity of the SFO*[43] "The original autonomy of the Third Order only lasted until 1289 and ended with the promulgation of the Rule of Nicholas IV in the document *Supra Montem.* This Rule obliged the First Order to undertake the visitation of the Franciscan Third Order and to provide it with spiritual assistance." He adds that because friars did not have jurisdiction over the Third Order, they did not want to be involved in it. It became increasingly obvious that the friars took over control of the Third Order until only recently with the Rule of Paul VI. The Pauline Rule gave back what belonged to the Third Order: their autonomy, and thus it was set up into various levels.

The SFO Rule asserts that "in the different levels, every fraternity is animated and guided by the advice of a Council and a Minister (or President), who are elected by the professed according to the Constitutions" n. 21. The autonomy of the SFO, that is, "the direct responsibility of self-suggestion"[44] is indispensable because the heart of one's responsibility is to "live the gospel in fraternity.

The SFO is a public association within the Church. It is divided into fraternities at various levels: local, regional, and international. Each one has its own juridical personality with the Church."[45]

You share the same Franciscan charism that we share as religious, but you operate in a secular way. Each has his weight to carry, both religious and laity. We can't be Franciscan religious without you, nor you without us. Each Order has to carry out its own responsibilities, so the SFO must work out its own development but can seek help from the First Order. However, the final decision belongs to the SFO in its organization, form of life and apostolate with the help of assistants.

Organization of the SFO

There is a need for all Fraternities to be united in a single Order in every Regional and National Fraternity. Councils in each area must be able to govern their areas, and until the order is self-sufficient financially, we cannot speak about the Order being autonomous. On a practical level, the idea that everything must come "cost free" is still around – not only in foreign mission countries, but even in "rich" countries. Few members in these countries are, in fact, "rich". Most members belong to "middle-class" and many are economically poor people – but even the poorest can contribute the "widow's mite". Each fraternity must try to contribute to the support of the Order at the various levels.[46]

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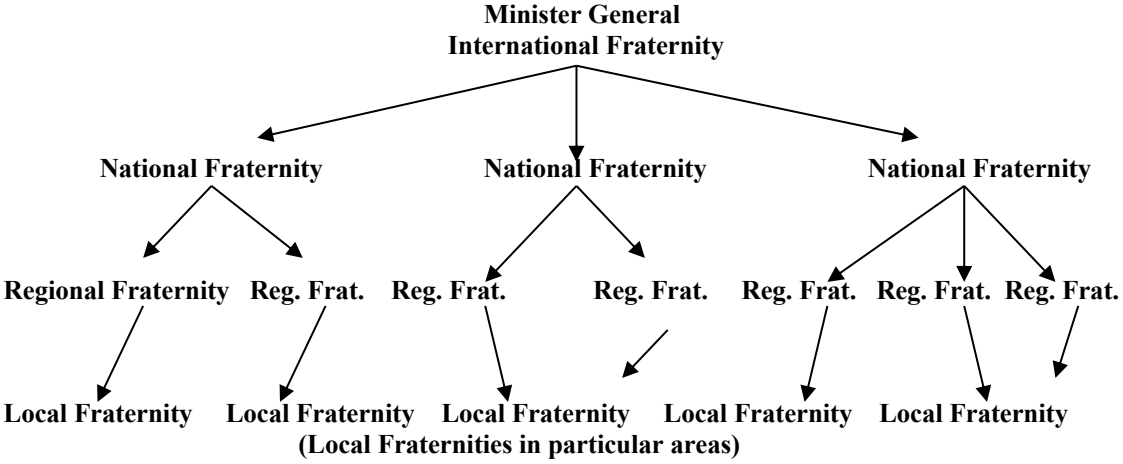
[42] Benet Fonck, OFM, op. cit.
[43] Colbourne, OFM Cap, Patrick, *The Autonomy and Unity of the Secular Franciscan Order,* Franciscan Institute of Oceania, 2002.
[44] G. Plaudet is quoted in *Letter to Assistants,* 1998 - 3, n. 18.
[45] GG.CC SFO art. 1.5
[46] Schafer, OFM, Carl, *"The Pauline Rule" in Koinonia*, 1998 - 8

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER[47]



Autonomy, together with unity and secularity, represent one total reality. There would not be an SFO totally autonomous if it were not united; there would not be a truly secular SFO if it depended on religious or it identified with the Friars who loaned them spiritual assistance. "The SFO is set up as an organic union of all the catholic fraternities spread throughout the world coordinated and united amongst themselves."[48] The Council and Minister of the fraternity of the higher level have the task to bind and coordinate the lower levels of the fraternity. Such a unity could not come about without autonomy being realized on the local level. Autonomy and unity are the two faces of the one medal. Autonomy demands that the SFO has, at all levels, some responsible seculars capable of fully assuming the functions of "animating and guiding" the Fraternity….[49]

It is significant that the Rule does not begin with a definition of the SFO but with a presentation of the Franciscan Family. The SFO realizes its autonomy in its rapport with "vital reciprocal communion" with the other components of the Family. This is in accord with the view of the Church as Communion-Mission and with the ecclesiology of the exchange of gifts. Ecclesial communion does not allow the community to enclose itself in its own spirituality, structure, and activity… Reciprocity presupposes respect for specifics; collaboration presupposes the autonomy of the collaborators. It is evident that for an exchange to be realized there must be various gifts, received and guarded, and that its charismatic identity must be clear. "Whether extraordinary of simple and humble, charisms are graces of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefit the Church, ordered as they are to its building up, to the good of all and for the needs of the world."[50] The SFO must take note of its own nature, its role and responsibility in the mission of the Franciscan Family.

Discussion Questions

- What do you understand by the term "the **autonomy** of the SFO"?
- Explain the need to have the hierarchical structure in the Fraternity in order to operate effectively. Does this affect personal responsibility?
- How can we overcome the attitude where we always expect to be "receivers" and not "givers" within our Fraternity? What are some ways to overcome this in a practical way?

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[47] **Note:** Though this may appear to have a hierarchical structure, it is democratic in that each fraternity votes its own ministers and council or council representatives.
[48] Rule 2. 20
[49] Nils Thompson, *Koinonia,* 1998 – 3 *"The Autonomy of the SFO"*
[50] Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 799

LESSON 27: THE SFO AND THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

This is a very large topic that we can only touch on here, but it is worthwhile considering amongst ourselves. It has many implications.

This aspect of mission is spelled out in the new Constitutions of the SFO. In the context of the Church and the world today, secular Franciscans and Assistants should be fully aware that they are Church, one of the basic characteristics of St Francis and the Franciscan Family. They should invite brothers and sisters of the SFO to an "identification" with the views coming from the universal Church and to 'sensitivity' to the life of the local Church.

We noted that the SFO is 'a public association within the Church'. "The local Fraternity is a visible sign of the Church, the community of love" (Rule 22) Today, we need the fraternity to be a sign of the 'Church – communion and mission'. It is significant to note that in the last questioning before profession in the SFO is insisted upon "…do you wish to bind yourself more closely to the Church and to collaborate in its perennial renovation and to its mission among men?" (Ritual of SFO, 29). All the associations of the lay faithful converge in ecclesiastical communion. In this they find their origins, the principal reasons for their existence and their most authentic end.[51]

We are reminded again that "The charism remains the concrete key for understanding the life of the Franciscan Family and of the Franciscan Secular Order in the Church. Extraordinary or simple and humble, the charisms are gifts of the Holy Spirit that, directly or indirectly, have an ecclesiastical usefulness, oriented as they are to the edification of the Church, to the good of men and to the needs of the world".[52]

Christifideles laici , in speaking about this aspect, refers again to the image of the Vine and the Branches. It tells us that "because they are grafted on to the vine one expects the branches to be fruitful. Life in Christ and in the Church demands this fruitfulness, for as St John reminds us *Without me you can do nothing (Cf. Jn 15:5).* Communion and mission are bound together so that one implies the other. Communion leads to mission and vice-versa. The Church recognizes this communion as a gift for every individual. 'The Church is a sign and instrument of the unity of all the human race.'[53]

In this mission Christ gives great responsibility to lay people. As Vatican 2 says, 'The Church's mission is to be carried out by all the faithful, not simply by pastors alone. The contribution of the laity is extremely important for the fruitfulness of the Church. The laity are prepared for this role by their baptism. Pope Paul VI insisted "It is through evangelization that the Church is built up into a community of true believers."

Today, when there are so many challenges to our faith, it is up to the laity to bring about a stronger Church through their evangelical activity by word and example.

Questions for Discussion

- What do you understand by "the mission of the lay faithful in the Church"?
- What do you see as the Fraternity's responsibilities in regard to mission?
- What are some practical ways to assist the mission of the Church?

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[51] Brusac, TOR, Zvonimir, *"Participation in the Life and Mission of the Church"* in *Koinonia*, 2000, n. 28
[52] Catechism of the Catholic Church, ibid.
[53] CL 32

PART FOUR

THE SPIRITUALITY

OF

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN

ORDER

LESSON 28: WHAT IS FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY?

Franciscan Spirituality is a specific way of living our Christian life in the footsteps of St Francis and St Clare. (See LESSON 27, page 60 above) The basis of his spiritual life is to be found in his concept of complete poverty of spirit and in his unique experience of God. Franciscan spirituality has been described by one author as "The spiritual journey sketched by St Francis and St Clare of Assisi and completed through history by their disciples which leads men and women to a living conscious and progressive conformity with Christ the Lord."[54]

Francis' journey to God is one of evangelical penance or radical conversion; a journey of minority, and positively, of charity, humble recognition of one's limits in this earthly life and the spiritual dimension of man – a journey that brings one to God who is the Lord who calls, who is Love, who is the Most High.[55]

Three miraculous events shaped Francis' spirituality. At the age of 23, firstly, he experienced a series of dreams or visions which led to his personal conversion through the practice of prayer and penance. Secondly, the San Damiano experience, "Go repair my church" incident; then in 1209, he heard the words of Mt 10:7 – 13 which gave him the pattern his life was to follow. These aroused three desires which were to be characteristic of his spirituality: to be united with God in **prayer**; to be an **apostle of the Church**; and **to imitate literally the life of Jesus** (St Bonaventure).[56]

Hence, let us trace out these ideas in the lessons to follow by examining some basic concepts in turn:

1. Christ-Centred Spirituality;
2. The Universal Fatherhood of God & Brother/Sisterhood of all Creatures
3. Saint Clare's place in Franciscan Spirituality
4. The Franciscan approach to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Questions for Discussion

- What do you understand by the term "Franciscan Spirituality"?
- Name some of the events that shaped Francis' life.
- What events have shaped your life as a Franciscan?

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[54] Lombardi, ofm *Introduction to the Study of Franciscanism,* 1992
[55] Cf. Alfonso Pompei, "*Dio, Trinità, Signore" in Dizionario francescano*
[56] Cf. Catholic Encyclopaedia, vol. 6 "Franciscan Spirituality", pp. 36ff.

LESSON 29: CHRIST-CENTRED LIVING IN ACTIVE IMITATION OF CHRIST

The *active Following of Christ (*just as the apostles did who left everything) is a theme that cannot be separated from the teaching of Christ who is the only "Way," the only Master. We cannot understand this unless we follow him and come to know the one on whom we have placed our unconditional faith.

The crisis of believers today is not in adapting to our world and modern mentality, but from the difficulty of conforming our lives to Christ who is the Source of our hope and who gives us dignity, direction, and a future. In practice, we have not conformed ourselves to him but hidden ourselves from him. Francis, on the other hand, has shown us the opposite by his example of active following of Christ. The norm of his life was to become conformed to Christ. He called upon Christ. He lived for Christ and he longed to become more and more like him.

Christ was everything to Francis: the source and origin of everything. It was Christ who called him, advised him and the sole basis of his life. Christ was the model in everything. Francis wanted Christ to be reflected in our life because Christ is our sole Master and Exemplar. Francis seemed to live only to express his ardent love for Christ. He expressed this in his life of deep prayer, in his conversations and his emotional remembrances and compassion for the sufferings of Christ especially in his Passion and death for love of us.

Francis' biographers often speak of Francis' "literal observance of the Gospel" and his "perfect imitation of the humility and poverty of Christ," and of the Franciscan habit (of the Friars Minor) being in the form of a cross, of the Tau with which he signed himself and which he drew on the walls of the cells of his brothers. To obey the words of Christ, he takes off his shoes and wants only one tunic. And to imitate Christ perfectly, he begins the fast until the Epiphany; he did not want to be called 'good'; he did not want a cell or bedroom to be called his own; he teaches his followers the 'Our Father' and uses the greeting of peace.

From all this we can say **that faithfulness to Christ and the Gospel is the basic, life-giving principle of Franciscan spirituality**. By this we mean the movement of the saint's whole person toward a Being whom he loved totally and whom he regarded as being actually present.

In Christ Francis found the source of all virtues. His total attachment to Christ strengthened his practice of the virtues (faith, hope, love) and resulted in Francis becoming worshipper of the Trinity in Christ and the mystic of La Verna. He was so filled with the love of Christ that God made him an image of the Saviour by giving him the stigmata on Mount Alverna.

Christ and the Gospel are the foundation upon which every other aspect of Franciscan spirituality can be related. This brings us to the question: What was Francis' image of Christ that he preferred? We must ask this question because **all spiritualities are centred on Christ**. What, then, is distinctive about this Christ-centred approach of Francis?

The self-emptying of Christ is the centre of Franciscan Spirituality. What stands out in Francis' life and writings is his preoccupation with the self-emptying (*kenosis* in Greek) of Christ. In this *kenosis* of Christ Francis saw God's infinite love for us in the fact that God the Son became a man, a human being like us, laying down his life on Calvary. This coming down, this humbling, this stooping to become small, this humility and poverty, this minority was appropriated by Francis, that is, taken upon himself when he gradually stripped himself of all signs of power and status in order to identify with the poorest, the lepers.

Questions for Discussion

- What is the difference between "imitating" Christ and "following" Christ?
- What do you understand by the phrase "literal observance of the Gospel"?
- How can Secular Franciscans use this concept in their daily lives?
- What makes Franciscan spirituality different from other spiritualities?

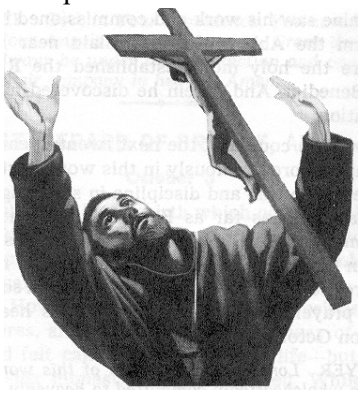
Reflection:

He always had the nature of God,
but he did not think that by force
He should try to become equal to God.
Instead of this, by his own free will he gave up all he had,
and took the nature of a servant.
He became like man
and appeared in human likeness.
He was humble and walked the path of obedience
all the way to death – his death on the cross.
For this reason, God raised him
to the highest place above
and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.
And so, in honour of the name of Jesus
all beings in heaven, on earth,
and in the world below
will fall on their knees,
and all will openly proclaim
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:6 – 10)[57]

[57] Good News Bible, (Australian Bicentennial Edition)

LESSON 30: FRANCIS' IDEA AND EXPERIENCE OF GOD

From what we have learnt in the Franciscan writings, we can clearly recognize that Francis had only one thought that completely occupied his whole attention: God. For him, God was his *all.* Nothing else was as important to him as God. He was so taken up reflecting on God that it often left him in ecstasy.[58]



We might wonder: who was God for Francis? Francis was no theologian, so if we asked him who God was, we could not hope to get a learned answer from him. But Francis was a witness to the living God, and all we can require from such a witness is that he should describe what he saw, heard, and felt and assure us that his experience was not mere fantasy, but a reality that had turned his life around.

Therefore, Francis is acting as a witness when he stands before us as an example of what God can do in us. At the same time, Francis reminds us how profound God is and how we cannot understand God's wonder. We don't take God seriously, for if we did, then our lives, too, would be turned around. That is what we mean when we speak of "conversion."

In this way, Francis shows us clearly that God is present among us and that we must welcome him with open arms if we are to experience the joy of feeling that we are loved with an infinite love. Francis' testimony to his faith can be believed because he was a living proof that men and women do well spiritually when they dare to allow the living God to be present in their lives.

When we try to approach the God who Francis knew, we are touching upon what is basic in every committed, responsible Christian: Such a person's journey through life is dominated by the presence of God. This is what marks a person as a Christian, and the kind of Christian he or she is. This is something we cannot ignore when we describe the soul's journey to God.

Who is God for a Franciscan?

Franciscan spirituality is built on concrete values. For Francis – as for all Christians – we can see the action of the Holy Spirit opening the soul to God's grace, and the living of one's life according to the image of God made present through these actions.

For example, in the life of Francis, we know that gradual understanding came to him each time he answered God's call. Francis succeeded in shaping an original way of living his Christian life within the Church, because he had experienced God in an original way. By living his life, he taught a series of attitudes and ways of living the Gospel that served to inspire many believers who were seeking to live their faith more fully.[59]

We must be clear: When we speak of Francis' "image" of God, we do not mean what he imagined, but a reality of what he actually experienced himself, what attracted and inspired him. In other words, how did he represent God to himself? Though Francis was not a theologian but a mystic, he often used the language of the liturgy to describe the experiences which God's presence set up within him.

So, we see that Francis found that the traditional image that he had of God had begun to change. The Spoleto experience made him reflect and led to the change of values that he had before. "…From then on, he would live in a kind of continual ecstasy, a permanent leaving of self behind to go out to the God of fulfilment. After this experience, he would no long go out cultivating his own personality but would set forth along new roads as a pilgrim of the Absolute searching always for God…"[60] So when we find Francis speaking about God, he always speaks in the highest degree of everything. E.g., "Most High God, Supreme

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[58] Cf. Pompei, A. Op. Cit. Loc. Cit.
[59] Cf. Julio Micó, OFM Cap *"Francis' Image of God"* in *Greyfriars Review ,vol 7, no. 2, 1993,pp.129ff.*
[60] ibid. (adapted)

God, Transcendent, Eternal, Glorious, Most Lovable, …etc." See Francis' "Praises of God" below to find how he uses words to express his experience of God.

Clearly, our image of God affects the way we act and behave towards God. Therefore, we need to examine our image of God to understand our own behaviour. Here is an exercise that might help us.

Questions for Discussion

- How do we experience God in our lives?
- How 'real' is God for us in our daily living?
- Can you describe how you came to truly know God?
- How can we come to know God as lovable and caring?

LESSON 31: FRANCISCAN PRAYER

Introduction

Imagine a family living in a house and the members never communicating with each other. In that situation, their relationship is not allowed to develop. This brings out the importance of communication. We can relate this to many instances when we see traditional enemies who try to continue old quarrels over many years. The story of Romeo and Juliet is the dramatic story of this same problem.

Prayer as a Personal Relationship

This brings out the importance there is to build up relationships in our fraternities.
Prayer is a relationship where there must be genuine communication for it to grow. One must learn to know the person to relate with that person. Francis learnt about God as a child by listening to his parents, through popular devotions, sermons, artwork and talks to others. His mother was French and so he learnt songs and stories. We are told how he sang in French when he was feeling happy. This fact also has cultural implications that we should keep in mind. All this is clear in his later life, so it's easy to understand that our background has a great influence on our prayer life.

We are told that Francis often remained absorbed with such sweetness of contemplation that, rapt outside of himself, he did not tell anyone what supernatural experiences he had had. And Celano adds: "[Francis] was totally transformed into a living prayer." For this man who became a "prayer", there was no question of time, place, method, or language. When he prayed at home he remained reserved but when in the bush, he wailed and cried, beat his hands on his chest and – making the most of the privacy – prayed intimately and in dialogue with the Lord in a loud voice; he answered to his Judge, begged the Father, spoke as a friend, joked in a friendly way with the Lord, often without moving his lips, meditated at length within himself, concentrating his external powers internally, he lifted his spirit on high.

You might say, "That was Francis. It's not me!" Yes, Francis was graced by God to have a very special relationship with God. But Francis tells his friars that this is not just for him. We are all called to contemplation. St Bonaventure tells us that God wants all of us to become so closely related with Himself that contemplation must follow. It is a matter of our cooperating with God's grace, and that is the difficulty. We often want our own way and make too much noise to hear God calling us to deeper prayer.

What is Franciscan prayer? It is path that leads us into a **relationship with God.**
If we examine the Rule of St Francis, you will discover that "his way of life is based on the Person of Jesus Christ i.e. the Good News dwelling among us. Francis' way of evangelical life is defined by how one experiences the presence of God through Christ. This experience of God in the flesh should orient the follower of Christ to bring a person into relationship, i.e. as a sister or brother. Community marks the life of Francis. Through his following of Christ, Francis became a brother first to the poor and the sick and ultimately to all creation.

What, then, could we say are the characteristics of Francis' prayer? We could say,

1. First of all, that it is not so much when, where or how he prayed that concerns us, but rather what were the things that reveal something about his personality: his style of prayer, his **creativity, spontaneity, and freedom** in expressing his prayers. We can see the **simplicity** in the stories told in the *Fioretti (The Little Flowers of St Francis)*: his description of "Perfect Joy" stands out as an example of **humility and acceptance**. When Francis meditated, he would often be filled with emotion and sing in French, take branches, and play them like a violin on his arm. He often ended up in tears in his contemplating the Passion of Christ.

2. There is always a **poetry and joy about Francis' prayer**. He praises God using poetic images, and often sings in praise of God. That is why he insisted on his friars singing the Divine Office if it were

possible. It was because of this that the early friars had a great influence on the liturgical music of their time.

3. **Francis always sought tranquillity and peace in prayer**. "The soul must have its food which is God." (2 Cel 96) Attention and composure were equal in meditation as he sought to maintain and to hide from the eyes of the inquisitive, hiding his head in his mantle. He would come away from prayer completely transformed, but he tried to hide this from others so as to avoid the danger of vanity.

4. **Francis taught prayer by his example.** Francis did not set out to teach his followers how to pray in words but by his own example. The Holy Spirit had taught Francis to pray and he received his inspiration from Sacred Scripture as he meditated on it, particularly the Gospel of St John. He was able to reflect on his own personal experiences and be taught to approach God. Francis learnt a great deal from his recitation of the canonical Hours and reflecting on Liturgical texts or sermons. His admonitions on prayer came from his own personal experience, his worship of the Blessed Eucharist and personal reflections.

   Francis' favourite places of prayer were the woods, rocky caves, cliffs, and abandoned churches. He had a passion for the psalms. He often prayed aloud when he was alone. There was a time when Br Leo overheard him praying: Francis prayed, "Who are you, my most dearest God and who am I?" Again, it was Francis' prayer that converted his faithful follower and disciple, Bernard of Quintavalle.

Questions for Discussion

- What are some ways that we could build up good relationships in our fraternities?
- How can we improve our prayer life?
- What characteristics of Francis' prayer appeal to you most?

LESSON 32: SOME SYMBOLIC MOMENTS IN THE LIFE OF ST FRANCIS

As we saw earlier, Francis was in awe and grateful for, even ecstatic over God's love. God made himself so poor and humble. This was made visible in the manger, the flight to Egypt, his hidden life, his behaviour in the face of opposition and his submission to a cruel and humiliating death on the cross, even though He was and is the Lord of glory.

For Franciscans, the privileged symbolic moments have always been **Bethlehem, Calvary,** and **Eucharist**: the Child Jesus, the Suffering Christ and the littleness of Broken Bread and Poured out Wine are the most compelling images of the fact that in Christ, God has chosen to become "poor for us in this world." This also explains the centrality of **poverty** and **thanksgiving** in Franciscan Spirituality: humble thanks recognizes that all has been given to us, and poverty imitates God by giving it all away. By choosing to be amongst the poor of this world, Francis sees himself as sharing in a truly divine activity, accepting his true identity as fashioned in the image of a self-giving God.[61]

BETHLEHEM

How did Francis come to appreciate this poverty of God, this self-emptying? When we look at Francis' experiences, it appears that his meeting with the leper was one of the most forceful incidents in his life making him come to terms with himself. He encountered Christ through a leper in whom both poverty and sorrow were united, and this experience penetrated his whole concept of the Incarnation and of the following of Christ.

It was the Lord who "took him among the lepers." He discovered Christ in the poor or what we call the "sacrament" of Christ in the poor. He treated poor people with the respect and dignity as children of God and his brothers and sisters in Christ. Celano noted that Francis shared this belief with his brothers:

> "Francis' soul *melted* for the poor, and to those to whom he could not extend a hand, he extended his affection. Any need, any lack he noticed in anyone, with a rapid change of thought, he turned back to Christ. In that way he read the Son of our Poor Lady in every poor person. As he held him naked in his hands, so he carried him naked in his heart…."[62]

This humble love of Christ continues to reveal itself in a church of sinners, in the human words of Scripture, in the small Eucharistic Host, in vulnerable priests, in the poorest human beings. Francis discerned and admired Christ's presence in all these humble forms and consequently chose to respond to such humble love by a life of poverty, humility – stripped of every sign of status or power.

GRECCIO

St Francis loved Christmas more than any other feast because, as he says, "And we give you thanks because….you have caused the true God and true man to be born of the glorious ever-Virgin , most blessed, holy Mary." (Rnb 23:5)

Francis meditated on the various aspects of the Incarnation in all its richness: above all on the Passion and Death which reflected the humility of God. Truly, from the time of his birth, Jesus set out to save us. Francis wanted to remember that at Christmas. He wanted his friars to celebrate Christmas out of love of him who gave himself up for us. We, too, should be joyfully generous not only with the needy but also with the animals and the birds. (Leg Perugia, 110)[63]

The love of the Child Jesus has remained joined to the famous celebration at Greccio in 1223. Perhaps one of the clearest symbols of Francis' devotion to Christ in Bethlehem is the incident of Greccio. This is narrated in 1 Celano as follows: "We should note, then, as a matter worthy of memory and something

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[61] Cf. Lombardi, ofm *Introduction to the Study of Franciscanism,* 1991
[62] Cf. Francis of Assisi, *The Founder, Celano "The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul" nn.85ff.*
[63] Cf. Cesario van Hulst, "Natale" in *Dizionario francescano, op. Cit.*

to be recalled with reverence, what he did three years prior to his death, at the town of Greccio, on the birthday of the Lord Jesus Christ.

There was a certain man in the area named John who had a good reputation but an even better manner of life. Blessed Francis loved him with special affection, since – despite being a noble in the land and very honoured in human society – he had sought nobility of the spirit. As usual blessed Francis had John called to him some fifteen days before Christmas.

'If you desire to celebrate the feast of the Lord together at Greccio,' Francis said to him, 'hurry before me and carefully prepare the things I tell you. For I wish to enact the memory of that baby who was born in Bethlehem: to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he rested on hay.'

Once the good and faithful man heard Francis' words, he ran quickly and prepared in the place all the things the holy man had requested.

Finally, the day to rejoice drew near and from many different places people were called to come to Greccio if they could and celebrate the feast. On the feast they gathered carrying with them lamps and torches to light up the night. Finally, Francis came, and he was glad to see so many there.
The manger was prepared, and hay was carried in and the ox and the ass were led to the spot. There in their simplicity, they remembered the holy night in Bethlehem. They sang and gave praise to God and the Mass was celebrated."[64]

We all recognize this today as the first crib which we are so familiar with at Christmas time. This scene brings to mind the inspiration that Francis gained by meditating on the poor, humble Christ who so humbled himself for us to become a helpless baby in a crib in Bethlehem.

Jesus Christ is for Francis *God-Man:* that man that all saw, who was the Son of God, and those who did not recognize him as such in faith, damned themselves. (cf. Adm 1:142). Even though he was not a theologian, Francis referred to Christ's humility, his poverty, and his condition as absolutely human, to his royalty and servant of all, so that imitating Christ, one could certainly call upon God as Father. Jesus, therefore, for Francis is God, Son of God, the Word of God, the Most High, the Wisdom of the Father, etc. In fact, the divinity of Christ suggests to Francis some attitudes, amongst which especially, is faith. Faith for the Poverello consists fundamentally in accepting Christ, his word, his saving presence in the Eucharist.

The divinity of Christ is understood by Francis in a Trinitarian way, resulting from his constant attention, and accenting of the relationship of son between Christ and the Father. For Francis, Jesus Christ is "the Son" and so equal to the Father, sent by the Father; he is the Word of the Father.

Jesus is also true man. "He received his flesh from our fragile humanity" and he appeared before the apostles with true flesh and blood. Therefore, the Son of God received true human flesh and lived his eternal divine sonship under the form of true obedience, and consequently he had to adopt poverty and be persecuted and accept the limitations of our human condition. (Adm 6) This humiliation was one of the thoughts that impressed Francis so much that he found it difficult to think of anything else.[65]

Questions for Discussion

- What do you understand by the Franciscan approach to Christmas?
- What do we mean when we speak of "the poverty of God"?
- How can we explain this idea to non-believers?

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[64] Cf. 1 Cel XXX, pp. 254ff. in Francis of Assisi, *The Saint,* vol. I (adapted)
[65] Cf. Pompei, Alfonso, "*Jesus Christ"* in *Dizionario francescano, op. Cit.*

LESSON 33: THE EUCHARIST GIVES LIFE TO THE FRATERNITY

One of the most intriguing people of recent times for me was Cardinal Francois Xavier van Thuan. He was not a Franciscan, but his example is truly Franciscan. He only died in 2002 but his life story is one that really stands out as that of a heroic and inspiring person that could very well be canonized one day. I think what fascinated me most was his love for the Eucharist. Let me quote from the document when he was given the Faith and Freedom award:

"His Eminence Cardinal Francis Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan serves the Catholic Church as President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace in Rome. He was formerly Archbishop of Saigon, Vietnam. Cardinal Van Thuan was born in Hue, Vietnam, in 1928 and completed studies in philosophy and theology in Vietnam. He was ordained to the priesthood of the Catholic Church in 1953. He pursued advanced studies in Rome from 1953-1959 and received a doctorate in Canon Law from Gregorian University in Rome.

He was a professor and then rector of the major seminary of Nha Trang, Vietnam. Cardinal Van Thuan was ordained to the episcopacy in April 1967 and led the Diocese of Nha Trang for eight years, until he was named coadjutor and later Archbishop of Saigon on April 23, 1975, by Pope Paul VI. Archbishop Van Thuan was accused by Vietnamese Communist authorities of being implanted in Saigon as a subversive influence. He was arrested on August 15, 1975 and imprisoned without trial for a total of 13 years, nine of them in solitary confinement. Instead of turning to bitterness or despair at this injustice, he chose to emulate Saint Paul's experience of writing letters while in prison and send a message of love and hope to his people, especially to youth, telling how every day, even in captivity, he lived his devotion to Jesus and Mary.

He wrote of a Divine voice calling out to him to "Choose God and not God's works," and responded, "'Yes, Lord, you are sending me here to be your love among my brothers, in the midst of hunger, cold, exhausting work, humiliation, injustice. I choose you, your will; I am your missionary here.' From this moment on a new peace fills my heart and stays with me for 13 years. I feel my human weakness; I renew this choice in the face of difficult situations; and I never lack peace." (From Five Loaves and Two Fish).

When he finally was freed, in 1991, he was expelled from his homeland. He went to Rome, where he served the Church in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, becoming its president in 1998. He was elevated a Cardinal of the Catholic Church on February 21, 2001.66 "

We are told that the Communists changed his Polish guards every two weeks but eventually gave up as he steadily converted all those sent to guard him and his captors came to fear that if he carried on, he would convert them all.

Cardinal Thuan's life is a modern-day testimony to how precious the Eucharist was to himself, both as priest and prisoner. In this year of the Eucharist the Cardinal's life is worthy of reflection to appreciate the gifts of both the Eucharist and priesthood in the life of the Church community. It is also a witness to the power of the Eucharist in our fraternity.

Discussion Questions

- What are some of the things that strike you about the life of Cardinal van Thuan?
- How did St Francis and St Clare act towards the Blessed Eucharist?

- What are some of the Franciscan approaches to the Blessed Eucharist that you know?

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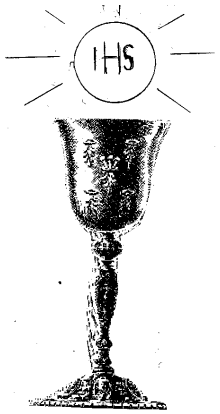
[66] Cardinal Van Thuan has published several books written during his captivity, two of which have been translated into a number of Western languages. The English versions are Five Loaves and Two Fish (1998) and The Road of Hope (1996).

- What are some of the things we can do to show our special respect and love for the Blessed Eucharist?

FRANCIS' PRAYER: "WE ADORE YOU, O CHRIST"[67]



This prayer is a liturgical formula which is recited on Good Friday and also on the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross:

"We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you,
because by your cross, you have redeemed the world."

Francis made three additions to this prayer: He added the name of Jesus Christ; the phrase "in all your churches throughout the world"; and the adjective "holy" to describe the cross. Some also added the word "here" after "Christ" which expanded the meaning of the prayer and many think this is what Francis intended.

The prayer, therefore, would read: "We adore you, most holy Lord Jesus Christ, here and in all your churches throughout the world, and we bless you, because by your holy cross, you have redeemed the world."

The prayer, said in a spirit of faith, can be considered the highest point of the Catholic faith that Francis required as the basis of his brotherhood. He refers to this in the Rule of 1221 three times, namely, in chapters one, two and twelve. Some manuscripts add "here" which would mean that one adores Christ not only here in this church but in every church in the world. The meaning of this prayer is clearly that Francis was praying in a church or in the sight of one and was filled with so great a faith that he thought about all the other churches in the whole world and he would like to pray there too.

Francis taught this prayer to his brothers who made it so much their own that they prayed it wherever they saw a church. To this day, it is a custom in the Order and is prayed by his followers when they enter a church. Francis had such a reverence for the Blessed Sacrament that he admonished his friars to always have reverence not only for the Eucharist but for everything connected to it: priests, churches, altars, and church furnishing and vestments, all books used for prayer and especially in the Mass.

Reflection:

Francis' Letter to the Entire Order

Let everyone be struck with fear;
Let the whole world tremble
and let the heavens exult
when Christ the Son of the living God
is present on the altar in the hands of a priest.
O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
O sublime humility! O humble sublimity!
The Lord of the universe,
God and the Son of God,
so humbles himself
that, for our salvation,
He hides himself
under an ordinary piece of bread!
Brothers, look at the humility of God,
and pour out your hearts before Him!
Humble yourselves

[67] Regis Armstrong, *St Francis of Assisi and Gospel life.*

that you may be exalted by Him.
Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves,
that he who gives himself totally to you,
may receive you totally.

LESSON 34: THE MEANING OF CALVARY FOR FRANCISCANS

"Christ, poor and crucified", victor over death and risen, the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity, is the 'book' in which the brothers and sisters, in imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering. They discover in Him the value of contradictions for the sake of justice and the meaning of the difficulties and the crosses of daily life. With Him they can accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances and live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity."[68]

The self-emptying of Christ could not be clearer than Jesus' suffering and death on Calvary. Could God's love for us be clearer than the offering of His Son to the hands of wicked men who whipped and cruelly crucified him like a common criminal? Francis wept when he saw a cross that reminded him of the suffering of his Lover.

Certainly, the Passion and Death of Jesus are for Francis a redeeming sacrifice; but for him, this saving character of the crucifixion had its basis in the life of Jesus. When Francis says that the Word was truly made man and when he says that the heavenly Father "gave his Son who was born for us," he meant God wanted to offer him as a bloody sacrifice on the altar of the cross, not for himself but for our sins….He became a man for others even to the point of giving his life for them. In other words, the death of Jesus was the historical and almost inevitable consequence of a life radically and unconditionally conformed to the coming of the Kingdom of God for all men equally. This was his mission. In this action of Jesus, in fact, he implied the condemnation of a social system based on the distinction of men as masters and slaves.

Jesus, therefore, put aside his own will to follow the will of the Father. He accepted his own human state and trusted himself into the hands of God who had always the last word…The death of Jesus was the consequence of the irresistible power of love and goodness. "You deigned to die for love of my love." Thus, he died out of love that did not recognize any compromise in practice but was totally intent on promoting the good of man and resist all that was evil for man in obedience to the Father.

Francis understood this lesson perfectly: his whole life was a marriage of perfect love of God with the love of his neighbour. The apostolic life which Francis longed to follow "with his whole heart" was one where he forgets himself and occupies himself with others, realizing that it was worthwhile dying for this ideal. Just as Jesus' life was totally spent in service of the Father and in creating a fraternal relationship in human society, so Francis imitated this in his life.

Questions for Discussion

- Could you explain very simply what this teaching of St Francis means for us today?
- What does this teach us about Francis' understanding of human suffering?
- How would you apply this teaching of St Francis to the Mass?
- What does it teach us about relationships amongst ourselves in our daily lives?

[68] SFO General Constitutions, article 10.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS – A FRANCISCAN DEVOTION

Of all the pious exercises that are connected with the veneration of the Cross, none is more popular than the Way of the Cross. Through this pious exercise, the faithful movingly follow the final earthly journey of Christ from the Mount of Olives, where the Lord "in a poor estate called Gethsemane" (Mk 14:32, was taken by anguish to Calvary where he was crucified between two thieves, to a garden where he was placed in a freshly made tomb.

The *Way of the Cross* is a synthesis of various devotions that have arisen since the high middle ages: the pilgrimage to the Holy Land during which the faithful devoutly visit the places associated with the Lord's Passion; devoted to three falls of Christ under the weight of the Cross; devotion to "the dolorous journey of Christ" which consisted in marching from one church to another in memory of Christ's Passion; devotion to the stations of Christ, those places where Christ stopped on his journey to Calvary because obliged to do so by his executioners or exhausted by fatigue, or because moved by compassion to dialogue with those who were present at his Passion.

The Stations, in its present form, was widely promoted by the Franciscan, St Leonard of Porto Maurizio (+ 1751) and approved by the Apostolic See. It contains 14 stations from the mid 17th century.

In the Via Crucis, various strands of Christian piety coalesce: the idea of life being a journey or pilgrimage; as a passage from earthly exile to our true home in Heaven; the deep desire to be conformed to the Passion of Christ; the demands of following Christ, which imply that his disciples must follow behind the Master, daily carrying their own crosses. (cf. Lk 9:23).

LESSON 35: A FRANCISCAN APPROACH TO WORK

Francis had a very distinctive approach in his concept of work. He lived at a time when cities were beginning to develop, and economies were being based on money and power. This is in contrast to the old exchange (barter) economy which had existed for centuries before.

Work has often been looked at from a negative point of view. The description in the Book of Genesis gave foundation to such an opinion: *"In the sweat of your brow you shall make your living." (Gen 3:19)* It is true that work is a fundamental fact of human existence. It is not evil as we know that, in the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis, *"The Lord God took man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and look after it" (Gen 2:15)* However, through sin, work was directly and deeply affected by sin, and so were we. But St Francis brings out the positive side of this: Women were to suffer at childbirth, but it was also to be a painful victory of life over death, so the daily affliction of man at work marks the exercise of his God-given power over creation.[69]

In fact, St Francis expresses his approach to work in the Later Rule of the Friars Minor in this way:

> *"Let those friars, to whom the Lord gives the grace to work, work faithfully and devotedly, in such a way that, having excluded idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, which all other temporal things should serve zealously. Indeed, concerning the wages of labour, let them receive for themselves and for their friars what is for the necessity of the body, except coins or money, and this (they should do) humbly, as befits the servants of God and the followers of most holy poverty"*[70]

Work, therefore, for St Francis is a 'grace' because men and women and all their activities are taken up, insofar as their origin is concerned, as a "gratuitous gift from God". St Bonaventure points out that graces are contained in work: for corporal work, they have the gift of strength of body; for spiritual work, they have acquired the facility to express themselves as an artist or tradesman who has acquired skill in his work. Clareno, an early biographer, points out that grace carries skill with it: the competence and capacity for work which is the expression of a gift gratuitously received.[71]

Work can be divided into various categories, such as, talents that one has which are not for oneself along but to be shared with others. St Francis describes his friars by their gifts in this passage from *The Little Flowers of St Francis:*

> *Francis used to say that a good Lesser Brother is one who would possess the life and qualities of the following holy brothers: namely, the faith and love of poverty which Brother Bernard most perfectly had; the simplicity and purity of Brother Leo who was truly a man of most holy purity; the courtly bearing of Brother Angelo who was the first soldier to enter the Order and was endowed with every courtesy and kindness; the friendly manner and common sense of Brother Masseo together with his attractive and gracious eloquence; the mind raised in contemplation which Brother Giles had even to the highest perfection; the virtuous and constant prayer of Brother Rufino who, whatever he was doing, even sleeping, always prayed without ceasing and whose mind was always intent on the Lord; the patience of Brother Juniper, who achieved the perfect state of patience because he always kept in mind the perfect truth of his low estate and the ardent desire to imitate Christ through the way of the cross; the bodily and spiritual strength of Brother John of Lauds, who at that time in his robust body surpassed everyone; the charity of Brother Roger whose life and conduct were spent in ardent love; the solicitude of Brother Lucidus who had the greatest care and concern and did not want to remain in any place for a month, and when he enjoyed staying some place, would immediately leave, saying, 'We do not have a dwelling here on earth, but in heaven' "*

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[69] Leon-Dufour (editor) *Dictionary of the Bible, "Work in the Bible"*
[70] Rb OFM, V 1-4
[71] Bertinato, Pierdamiano, in *Dizionario francescano* under "*Lavoro"*

The purpose of work, according to St Francis, is to form an enthusiastic society awaiting the realization of spiritual, ethical, and intellectual values where the gifts that are within persons constitute the only capital that cannot be manipulated. In other words, Franciscan work tends towards a community based on existence, rather than on possessions.

In line with this, Rule 13 states: *"They (Secular Franciscans) should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to 'create worthy conditions of life' for all to work for the freedom of all people." And Rule 14 adds, "(They) should also act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivation."* In this way, they build up the Kingdom of God.

Questions for Discussion

- What is different about the Franciscan approach to work to other approaches?

- What are the ways suggested in the General Constitutions of the SFO to implement the Franciscan ideal of work?

- What are some of the benefits of this approach?

LESSON 36: THE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD OF GOD

What does "Universal Fatherhood[72] of God" mean?

Francis saw Jesus as one who, on the basis of radical poverty, distanced himself from possessive attitudes and placed himself in a life of poverty, as one who 'lived on the margin' and made himself live in such a way that he came to understand the true meaning of turning to God as Father. Like Jesus, Francis, when he stood naked before the Bishop in Assisi, called on his Father in heaven as a genuine break away from what was accepted in his culture.

The first image that Francis knew of God was that of invoking God as "Father" as a result of his practical breaking away from all those things in his environment that worked adversely against human brotherhood and oppression to people. This was a new aspect of Jesus revealed to Francis: God who could not be measured by human expressions and who was to be loved above everything else. We were not to seek what we could get from God, but what we could offer God; we were to stand 'naked before God to follow the naked Christ on the cross.'

Francis had no other concern throughout his life than to cling to God with his whole heart. Francis' love for God led him to the loving embrace of his Father, the brotherhood of Christ and communion with the Holy Spirit. His response to God is summed up in the Rule of 1221:

"[1] All-powerful, most holy, Almighty and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth, we thank You for Yourself, for through Your holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit, You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise. [2] Through our own fault we fell.

[3] We thank You for as, through your Son, You created us, so through your holy love with which you loved us, You brought about his birth as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary and You willed to redeem us captives through his cross and blood and death.

[4] We thank You for Your Son Himself will come again in the glory of His majesty to send into the eternal fire the wicked ones who have not done penance and have not known You; and to say to all those who have known You, adored You and served You in penance: *Come, you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world."* [5] Because all of us, wretches and sinners, are not worthy to pronounce Your name, we humbly ask our Lord Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, *in Whom You were well pleased,* together with the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, to give You thanks, for everything as it pleases You and Him, Who always satisfies You in everything through Whom You have done so much for us. Alleluia!" (RnB XXIII 1-5)

Francis felt this welcome by God from the moment of his conversion, and he responded by accepting the suffering he had to endure. Remember that Francis was really attached to his father, Pietro, and to renounce him must have been a very difficult thing for him to do: "From now on I will not say, 'my father Pietro Bernadone', but 'our Father in heaven,' because I have placed my every treasure, my trust and hope in him." Francis became fully dependent on God and trusted him completely as his father.

Francis' stripping of himself and his total availability to his brothers in imitation of Christ grows proportionately to his contemplation of God revealed in Jesus Christ, humbled, and crucified for us all because only this practical attitude makes the perception of the "Most High God" possible and thus be possessed by Him.

Questions for Discussion

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[72] I am using Scriptural language here and, naturally, this does not exclude the "Motherhood" of God as we find it often in the Old Testament.

- What does the “Universal Fatherhood of God” mean to you?
- What image does the “Fatherhood” of God bring to mind for you?

LESSON 37: LIVING IN FRATERNITY

In this section, we examine the question: "Who are we as Franciscan brothers and sisters?" The concept of "brotherhood" or "sisterhood" is one of the main characteristics that mark us as true followers of St Francis. There is a deep bond that Francis and Clare often reminded us about in their Rules.

There are different levels of relationship to be considered. We can think of brotherhood on two levels: the natural and a spiritual level:

The Natural Level

As people, we talk about "brothers" or "sisters" meaning a blood relationship, that is, they have the same parents. We can say the same about animals. They have brothers and sisters like we do. Natural brotherhood or sisterhood is not a matter of choice, but of acceptance. We choose friends, but brothers or sisters are *accepted* or *refused*. For example, we hear stories about some families where a member or more may be rejected. Such rejection could be because a girl in the family gets pregnant outside of marriage – especially in some cultures; or because a boy contracts AIDS; or because of a crime committed…

There are numberless ways that we could describe where a boy or girl is rejected by his or her family or by the community. Psychologists tell us that being accepted is an essential part of normal growth. During World War II it was shown again and again how important it is that we need love to reach adult maturity.

Relationship is opposed to the idea of a "stranger." A stranger is not related by blood or homeland. So, a "wantok" in Papua New Guinea (a person from the same village or area) can claim relationship because he or she comes from the same place or has the same language. This can be the basis of their friendship and even duty to help the other. It's interesting that Francis tells us to go though the world like "pilgrims and strangers." That is part of the idea of Franciscan poverty.

The strong bond of relationship between brothers and sisters is one that can never be broken. Even after death, one cannot truthfully deny the fact that a certain person is your brother or sister if that is the case.

Spiritual Brothers and Sisters

Approaching this from another viewpoint, we could speak about spiritual brothers or sisters as Christians. We are spiritual brothers and sisters when we give witness to the world that God is Father of all. We read in John's First Letter, "If we say we love God, but hate others, we are liars; for we cannot love God, whom we have not seen, if we do not love others, whom we have seen. The command that Christ has given us is this: whoever loves God must love others also."(1 Jn 4:19 – 20) In other words, the love we show each other proves the love we have for God.

Christian brotherhood is a revelation of the community love that exists in the Blessed Trinity. It is the revelation of the origin of every fatherhood in heaven and on earth. The community of love in God is the revelation of community of love amongst men. God is honoured by man and man is honoured by God. The Christian community is the acceptance of God as Father and the acceptance of every man or woman as brother or sister. It is a witness that reveals that the disciples of Christ are reborn to a new and common life with Christ.

Christian life is based on baptism which is the natural basis of Franciscan brother/ sisterhood. Franciscan brotherhood or sisterhood offers a witness to the Church and to the world. This is clear from Francis saying he "measures himself with Christ and the Gospel." But it also flows from the universal fatherhood of God and the Universal Brotherhood of Man.

Raised up by God for the restoration of the Church, St Francis leaves us the involvement and the responsibility to build the kingdom of God with all the capabilities of our hearts and minds. As the Word of God became man to restore the gift of divine life to all, so Francis made "fraternity" to restore to every creature the love for the fatherhood of God and the joy of many brothers and sisters. The Gospel experience

of France is put before us as the “Rule of life” and the statement or plan (“propositum”) of sure observance of the Gospel.

Questions for Discussion

- What difference is there between “natural brothers” and “spiritual brothers”?

- As truly brothers and sisters, what are some practical ways that we could serve each other in genuine brother/sisterhood?

- In what way should Secular Franciscans be “Peace-makers”?

LESSON 38: CHARACTERISTICS OF FRANCISCAN FRATERNITY

From the time of our Franciscan profession, we are not alone, but always live in communion with our brothers and sisters. Our profession to live according to the Gospel means that we live in a community of brothers/sisters. "It is within the community and because of the community that our vocation is brought to maturity; for **it is our Fraternity which is the privileged place of our encounter with God.** We share the same goal and help each other to reach it. We turn towards each other in mutual love according to the command and example of Christ."[73]

Therefore, we look to each other with **mutual respect** and, with simplicity, make known our needs to each other in a spirit of service. Such an attitude would avoid any disputes, grumbling and anger or negative judgments of each other. The main characteristic is **love** not simply in words but in actions. In other words, we much be genuine, undiscriminating witnesses to the Gospel. Positively, we must seek to be peacemakers and reconciling one with the other both within and outside our communities.

From the absolute primacy of God as Father, the Creator of all creatures, Francis broadened his understanding to a universal brotherhood / sisterhood centred on Christ. (That means that we regard everyone as our brother or sister.) By following Christ's teaching and example, his life would be transformed into a hymn of praise and glory of the Father. He longed to be captured by the love of Christ so that he might die for Christ, just as Christ died for love of us.

In this Christ-centred vision, love for the Son of God and Son of Man is at the basis of the universal brotherhood of all things. This is expressed by Francis in his *Canticle of the Creatures* (also known as *The Canticle of the Sun*) which we know so well:

Most High, all-powerful, good Lord,
Yours are the praises, the glory, and the honour, and all blessing,
To You alone, Most High, do they belong,
And no human is worthy to mention Your name.

Praised and bless my Lord and give Him thanks
And serve Him with great humility.

Francis wanted his brothers to love each other because that is what God wants: "This is my commandment, that you have love one for another as I have loved you." (Jn 13:35)

There is a responsibility of all the members of our fraternity, by means of personal presence, in participation, by means of active collaboration, by means of praying together and witnessing together.

We say, 'We are to live the radical Gospel ideal – a 'Gospel life'. What does that mean to us? This means that any effort we make at re-thinking our identity must be according to the demands of the Gospel and our generous response to them. We must become a witnessing community by the way we observe the precept 'to love one another as I have loved you.' This was Jesus' last command to his intimate companions in mission.

For a fraternity on any level to be healthy, there are **five qualities that express this**: praying together, studying together, ministering together, sharing in conversation together and having fun together. These are the five qualities of a healthy fraternity. If you say you fulfil these requirements, then your fraternity is strong.

It is comforting to know that we are not alone in fraternity. We are travelling with brothers and sisters who share our life. It is within the fraternity and because of the fraternity that our vocation is brought to maturity, for the fraternity "is the privileged place of our encounter with God". We all share the same goal, and we are helping each other to reach it. It is by turning to each other in mutual love that we follow the

[73] Franciscan Vocation Conference, *Take up the Search,* 1973

command of Christ. Therefore, we look at each other as brothers and sisters with mutual respect, making known our needs with simplicity and serving each other. In this spirit, we avoid disputes, grumbling and anger or negative judgments. In other words, we must love each other in deeds, and not only in words with the tenderness of a mother.

"Fraternity is that dimension of love that is proclaimed in the Gospel. It is the Franciscan solution to the person-group and individual-community tensions. It's chief thrust is great cultivation of spiritual and evangelical brotherhood/sisterhood to favour dialogue and persuasion as normal, without destroying the wholesome and proper authority of our leaders, to stimulate the spirit of cooperation and co-responsibility, community action, eliminating privileged little groups (cliques), without endangering the will to obey; to make evident advantages of unity through diversity noting difference between unity and uniformity.

Questions for Discussion

- What do you think are the qualities of "Franciscan brother/sisterhood?
- What binds us to our brothers and sisters locally? Regionally? nationally? And internationally?
- Why is it important for us to attend Fraternity meetings?

Scripture Reflection

> *"I pray that they all may be one, Father! May they be in us, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they be one, so that the world will believe that you sent me. I gave them the same glory you gave me, so that they may be one, just as you and I are one. I in them and you in me, so that they may be completely one, in order that the world may know that you sent me and that you love them as you love me." (Jn 17:21 – 23)*[74]

Life in fraternity is modelled on this text. There must be a Gospel quality of life within our fraternities where union and mutual collaboration among the brothers and sisters are promoted. Also, their active participation and action within the Church is evident. The actual participation and collaboration we have within the Church happens when we, as a fraternity at various levels – local, national, and international – are connected one with the other on these various levels. That raises the question: How do we cooperate and participate with our Franciscan brothers and sisters in the Franciscan Family? I can say from my experience, "We did very little together in actual fact." It may have changed now.

[74] From *The Good News for Modern Man, Australian edition,1988*

LESSON 39: THE PLACE OF ST CLARE OF ASSISI IN FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

It is true to say that up until recent years the place of Clare of Assisi in Franciscan spirituality was only secondary. She was regarded as the faithful disciple of St Francis and only a reflection of Francis. That is, without Francis she was regarded as of little importance by many writers. It was only when Franciscan theologians began to look more earnestly into her life and work that they realized how significant she was and is in understanding the Franciscan charism. She was no longer "just a disciple" but she stood in her own right as the co-foundress of the Franciscan charism, giving it a new dimension that had been overlooked by authors for so many years. In this course, we attempt to bring out some of those new insights into her life which may help us to appreciate her position in Franciscan spirituality and in our lives.

To understand Clare of Assisi we must first come to know her as a real person. We can do this to some extent by examining her writings. Unlike her fellow citizen, Francis, there is not a great deal of written material available to help us to do this. What we have are a few writings left by Clare herself which reveal something about her personality and spirituality. Jean-Francois Godet tells us: "Above all, it is necessary to discover in the writings that image of Clare herself which is incarnated for the first time in the *Form of Gospel Life* left by her as a heritage to her followers." [75]

It is a matter, then, of coming into contact with the living Clare through the Rule, which expresses her charism – the gift of the Spirit – as officially recognized by the Church."[76]
This was the charism which she lived for forty years before she expressed it in writing. Her struggle to preserve this charism was her life's work and only concluded a few days before her death. The Rule was her cherished possession which said in only twelve chapters what was in her heart for so many years.

Besides the Rule we can also come to know Clare through her letters to Agnes of Prague which contain an insight into her spirituality. And again, we have another document only fairly recently discovered, *The Process of Canonization* which is regarded as a primary source of information on Clare.[77] From all these documents we can discover the feminine expression of the Franciscan charism and a new approach in the following of Christ, as we see in the Second Order of St Francis today.

Some Questions for Discussion

- What are some of the erroneous ideas about Clare and her place in Franciscan Spirituality?

- Discuss how you see Clare's place in Franciscan Spirituality.

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[75] Godet, Jean-Francois, *A New Look at Clare's Gospel Plan of Life", in Greyfriars Review, vol 5, Supplement, 1991.*
[76] Ibid.
[77] Carney osf, Margaret *The Rule of St Clare and the Feminine Incarnation of the Franciscan Evangelical Life", Doctoral Thesis, Rome, 1989.*

LESSON 40: THE FRANCISCAN APPROACH TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

Introduction

In speaking of Francis' relationship to Mary, we cannot expect him to express his ideas in theological terms. However, we know that Francis fully accepted the teaching of the Church of his time. He listened to sermons and was aware of popular piety of his time. Moreover, he reflected on the Scriptures and developed his own Marian piety which is noted by biographers such as St Bonaventure and Thomas Celano:

> *"He embraced the Mother of Jesus with inexpressible love, she made the Lord of Majesty a brother to us. He honoured her with his own Praises, poured out prayers to her, and offered her his love in a way that no human tongue can express."*[78]

For this reason, we shall seek to establish Francis' approach to Mary which seems to be so remarkable in that his insights touch on Mary's role in salvation history – an approach which is well in advance of his time and in line with recent teachings of the Second Vatican Council. Therefore, let us examine the following:-

1) Francis' Image of Mary;
2) Franciscan Devotion to Mary

FRANCIS' IMAGE OF MARY

What was Francis' image of Mary? We know that we must place Francis' relationship with Mary in his understanding of her motherhood. Because of her motherhood she shared in the work of redemption and made the Lord of Majesty our Brother.

[1] All-powerful, most holy, Almighty, and supreme God, Holy and just Father, Lord King of heaven and earth, we thank You for Yourself, for through Your holy will and through Your only Son with the Holy Spirit, You have created everything spiritual and corporal and, after making us in your own image and likeness, You placed us in paradise. [2] Through our own fault we fell.

[3] We thank You for as, through your Son, You created us, so through your holy love with which you loved us, You brought about his birth as true God and true man by the glorious, ever-virgin, most blessed, holy Mary and You willed to redeem us captives through his cross and blood and death. (Rnb 23"1 – 3)

In this text, Francis joins adoration of the human creature with the majesty of God who came down to us born of the Virgin Mary. This not only gives us reason to rejoice but also to give thanks and praise to God the Father for having sent his Son to be so close to us through Mary. Thus, we praise and honour Mary.[79] Francis often speaks of Jesus Christ on the one hand, as "so worthy, so holy, so glorious," and on the other hand, "the womb of Mary from whom 'he received the flesh of our humanity and our weakness.' In this way, Francis speaks of the infinite richness of Christ and then the poverty that he shared with his mother.

Here is how Francis addresses Mary in the *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary,* which is mainly dedicated to the motherhood of Mary, using many of the titles under which she was named in Medieval literature:

The Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary

[1] Hail, O Lady, Holy Queen,
Mary, holy Mother of God,
Who are the Virgin made Church,
[2] Chosen by the most Holy Father in heaven
whom he consecrated with His most holy beloved Son
and with the Holy Spirit the Paraclete,
[3] in whom there was and is

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[78] 2 Cel 198; also see LM 9:3

[79] Francis probably stressed this because of the Cathari and Docetists who denied the true motherhood of Mary because of their dualism: They regarded all material things as evil and denied the Incarnation and the human nature of Christ.

all fullness of grace and every good.

[4] Hail His Palace!
Hail His Tabernacle!
Hail His Dwelling!
[5] Hail His Robe!
Hail His Servant!
Hail His Mother!

[6] And hail all You holy virtues
which are poured into the hearts of the faithful
through the grace and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit,
that from being unbelievers,
You may make them faithful to God.[80]

Note that Francis never honours Mary twice with the same title and that Francis defends the orthodoxy in his teaching on Christ referring to the motherhood of Mary with a style that is all his own. Notice also that the title "Virgin made Church" reflects St Ambrose's teaching about Mary as a type or Model of the Church. Francis' preference for the motherhood of Mary led him to see Christmas as the "feast of feasts". Greccio and the re-enactment of the Christmas scene in the first crib was a concrete expression of his love for this feast and what it meant to him. In it, Francis wanted the mystery of the Incarnation to become visible to everyone, the incarnation of God in the flesh of Mary. Francis amazed everyone with his feeling for the "Child of Bethlehem" so that Celano writes that God used Francis to have the Child Jesus reborn in many hearts that had forgotten him.[81]

Francis based his ideas on the motherhood of Mary, and a Christology based on the historical life of Jesus – one that invites us to consider Jesus, his teachings and example as the model in which the Lord of Majesty lives his brotherhood with us until death. It is only this way of looking at things that makes calling upon God as Father make sense. "The remembrance of the motherhood of Mary is the efficacious invitation to live, pray and act as our brother Jesus, so as to experience in our daily lives a walking towards God."[82]

The attitude of Francis towards Jesus and Mary has nothing of the abstract and theoretical about it because he is led to it always by seeing in the concrete life of Jesus and Mary the self-revelation of God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who places on us the necessity of a fraternal life according to the Gospel, as the basis of any communion with the Father.

Discussion Questions

- What struck you as typically Franciscan aspects of Francis' approach to Mary?
- On what did Francis base his ideas on Mary?
- How can we make Francis' approach our own?

[80] Cf. Early Sources, *Francis of Assisi – the Saint, vol. I, p. 163*
[81] Cf. 1 Cel 84
[82] Pompei, Alfonso, "Maria" in *Dizionario francescano, op. cit.*

LESSON 41: FRANCISCAN DEVOTION TO MARY

Francis went to the Gospels as the basis of his devotion to Mary. In pondering over the episodes in her life, he was able to form a picture of her place in our devotion to her. Francis recognized Mary's intimate role in the work of salvation, intimately associated with Jesus in his work with her maternal role. Her deep faith, her power of intercession, her witness and suffering are clearly seen in the Gospels. Her maternal role towards the disciples is also clear. Francis' devotion and piety are set afire by re-living these events in the life of Mary and her association with Christ in bringing about our salvation.

Mary is, for Francis, the Madonna of the Poor (2 Cel 83), and God chose her to be his Mother and wanted to share his poverty with her as a way to save men and lead them again to experience the fatherhood of God on the basis of a recreated human brotherhood, which consisted in genuine solidarity with the poor, because the Poverello used to say, "As for me, I consider it a royal dignity and an outstanding nobility to follow that Lord who, though he was rich, became poor for our sake,"[83] and participate in the salvation of Jesus with whom all his followers must take a part. Therefore, by demanding poverty of the friars, he directs them to Christ who was "poor and a guest, and lived on alms, he and the Blessed Virgin Mary and his disciples.[84] And his final wish was "Follow the life and poverty of the Most High, our Lord Jesus Christ and most holy Mother and persevere in it until the end."

Therefore, he meditated with tears, weeping over the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ and his Mother.[85] But this heart-felt weeping of Francis in the face of the past of Christ and Mary, risks not being understood unless we face it with the voluntary choice of poverty by him and which he attributed to all the poor: voluntary poverty, with the joy that accompanied it, comes from the fact that for Francis the Gospel of the Kingdom and of the mysterious presence of God in our midst have become more important that their own interests, or rather, welcoming them forgets their own self-interests "to be converted", "to do penance".

God who had chosen to share poverty with Mary became her Son; he is the new God who makes supreme what is the least; he is a different God who has not got our logic, who chooses poverty and the poor as his "sacrament", his sign and symbol. Celano says this well when he explains the compassion of Francis towards the poor, how he was consumed for the poor, and how he associated himself with the poor "by a display of poverty" that made not only his heart to be lifted towards nature, but for theological reasons, to charity towards others.[86]

Some Characteristic Attitudes

Francis made Mary his Advocate and his followers' advocate also (LM 9:3) when he named her **Advocate of the Franciscan Order** (2 Cel 198), because he wanted her to represent them before the Lord to defend them in all their difficulties and to give thanks to the Blessed Trinity on their behalf. He also wanted Mary to intercede with God to pardon their sins. Francis' approach to Mary is sober and well-grounded seeing Mary cooperating with Jesus in his work as mentioned earlier.

Another characteristic of Franciscan devotion to Mary is their relationship to the various **Marian sanctuaries**, particularly the Porziuncola which is central as the mother church of the whole Franciscan Order. Francis commended his friars to maintain the Porziuncola as the model for all other Franciscan sanctuaries and marked this with special indulgences each year for those who venerate her each year on the 2nd of August.

Discussion Questions

- What was the source of Francis' devotion to Mary?
- What are some of the aspects of Mary that Francis stressed?
- What are some typical Franciscan attitudes towards Mary?

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[83] 2 Cel 73
[84] Rnb 9:31
[85] 2 Cel 200
[86] Cf. 2 Cel 83

LESSON 42: SOME FRANCISCAN DEVOTIONS TO MARY

Introduction

Popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary is important and used throughout the whole world. It is expressed in many different ways either my prayers, or religious practices especially at Marian shrines, e.g., Lourdes or Fatima. It is an expression of faith and love for Christ, the Redeemer of us all and His mission. Mary also shared in that mission and so she is remembered not only as Mother of God, but our Mother also.

"The Church exhorts all the faithful – sacred ministers, religious and laity – to develop a personal and community devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary through the use of approved and pious exercises."[87]

a) The *Angelus Domini (Angel of God)*

Francis, with his emphasis on the Incarnation, had a great devotion to Mary. When he came back from the Holy Land in 1220, he wanted to make people aware of prayer frequently during the day just as the Moslems did. He introduced ringing bells three times daily as a call to prayer at sunrise, at sunset and at midday. The practice of praying at these times was established and gradually the *Angelus Domini* was created to fulfil the need to pray often.

This prayer was popularized by the Friars and the faithful quickly took it up and it became customary to pray especially at Marian shrines. The *Angelus* is the traditional form used by the faithful to commemorate the holy annunciation of the angel Gabriel to Mary. It reminds us of the salvific event when God the Son became man to fulfil the plan of the Father.

"It is 'desirable that on some occasions, especially in religious communities, in shrines dedicated to be Blessed Virgin, and at meetings or conventions, the *Angelus* be solemnly recited by singing the *Ave Maria,* proclaiming the Gospel of the Annunciation" and by the ringing of bells.[88]

b) The Franciscan Crown

"The Franciscan Crown" called also "the Rosary of the Seven Joys of the Blessed Virgin Mary" dates back to the year 1422. The famous Franciscan, Fr Luke Wadding, relates this story: A very pious young man called James was a devotee of Mary. Every day he would visit the local church and lay a wreath of flowers on Our Lady's altar. He eventually sought entry into the Franciscan Order at Assisi, but early on in his novitiate he found he could not continue with his daily practice of presenting flowers to the Blessed Virgin. This saddened the new novice and he made up his mind to leave the Order. Kneeling at Mary's altar he told his heavenly mother what he planned to do and why. Our Lady appeared to him and said, "Remain here, and do not grieve because you can no longer weave a crown of flowers for me. I can teach you how you can daily weave a crown of roses that will not wither and will be more pleasing to me and more meritorious for yourself." She taught him to pray the seven-decade rosary with two additional Hail Marys in honour of the seventy-two years she lived upon this earth.

Recite one Our Father and ten *Hail Mary's* while recalling the seven joys I experienced. If you recite these prayers as I have directed, rest assured, dear son, you will weave for me a most beautiful and acceptable crown and will merit for yourself innumerable graces.

Young Friar James began at once to recite the prayers as instructed. At the same time the novice master entered the church and watched in amazement while an angel wove a wreath of roses and after every tenth rose the seraph inserted a golden lily. When the wreath was complete, he placed it upon the head of the young novice.

In holy obedience the young man then told the novice master what had transpired and as a result the custom of reciting the seven joys of Our Lady became widespread.

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[87] Congregation for Divine Worship, *Directory on Popular Piety & the Liturgy,* ST Paul's Books, 2002
[88] ibid. p. 140

These are the **seven joys of Our Lady's life**:

1. The Annunciation;
2. The Visitation;
3. The Nativity;
4. The Adoration of the Magi;
5. The Finding in the Temple;
6. The Resurrection;
7. The Assumption of Mary and her Coronation.

Traditionally, the seven decades are interspersed with the intercession:

"Ever praised and thanked be the Most Holy Trinity
For all the graces conferred upon Mary."

CONCLUSION: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER AND THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR

The history of the development of the Third Orders Regular of St Francis is very complicated, but we need to understand how the Third Order of St Francis became the Third Order Regular of St Francis.

To understand how the Third Order of St Francis developed into the Third Order Regular of St Francis, we need to look at the situation of the time in the 12th and 13th centuries. During this period, there was a strong trend to form into groups.[89] Many tended to live in convents or monasteries; others, lived as tertiaries. For example, in Germany, France and Italy, the Elizabethan Sisters followed Elizabeth of Hungary and occupied themselves with the care of the sick and lived in a semi-cloistered community. The Grey Sisters also followed this pattern of life. Both these groups chose the Rule of the Third Order of St Francis to follow rather than that of St Clare of Assisi because they did not want to live in an enclosed life, but to continue in their charitable work.

Another movement of women was called the **Beguines.** These were small groups of unmarried women or widows who lived in common. Many of these were influenced by members of the Third Order of St Francis and decided to adopt their Rule. Thus, the Third Order Regular came about.

The male counterparts of the Beguines were called **Begards** and they also associated themselves with the Third Order. In the Low Countries and Northern France, guilds of working men were formed. These were mainly weavers and cloth workers. They wanted to live together under a simple Rule and when the Rule of 1289 was promulgated, many of these communities of Begards became members of the Third Order. In 1346, a group of 17 houses of Begards in Belgium decided to accept only Third Order members. Thus, either by adoption of the Third Order Rule by communities already in existence, or by the foundation of new houses the number of groups of men and women living in community under the Rule of Nicholas IV grew rapidly.[90]

When Friar Jerome Masci of Ascoli Piceno, former Minister General of the Friars Minor, was elected Pope in 1288, he responded to requests from Franciscan Penitents to give them a Rule. We considered this earlier.[91] As we said earlier, this Rule gave an impetus to common life even though unintentionally for the Rule did not even mention living in common.[92] However, the spread of Third Order members living in common increased dramatically.

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[89] See pp. 6ff. above
[90] Karecki & Wroblewski, op. cit.
[91] cf. p. 21 above.
[92] Karecki quotes Pazzelli as saying that perhaps this was why many chose the Rule of St Augustine who gave directives to those living in common.

The Five Steps in the Evolution of the TOR from SFO[93]

The SFO Rule by its very nature favoured the spread of community life. It was never a pious association but a real "Order" with a Rule, habit, novitiate, profession, and privileges canonically recognized. Such communities existed in the 13th century. It was already happening before the Rule of 1289. This transition from "secular" to "regular" was a five-step evolution. We follow Karecki and Wroblewski in outlining the stages:

1) Religious Life was approved. The practice of profession of religious vows for the members of the Third Order by Pope John XXII in 1323 was approved. The bull *Altissimo in divinis* approved "regular religious life" in the Order. Often communal life was lived in connection with hospitals and hospices, e.g., St Angela of Foligno (1249 – 1309) gathered a group of friars to care for the lepers in the municipal hospital.

2) Religious communities federated. Certain groups of tertiaries were united and organized into congregations in the 15th century. They followed the Third Order Rule and professed three vows and were engaged in charitable activities without any enclosure. These formed "federations", "congregations" or "chapters" but each group retained its autonomy. This eventually led to the T.O.R. e.g., when Bishop of Liege gathered all groups of Begards in his diocese into a single congregation. Each house had it own superior and elected officers and with an annual chapter.

3) Tertiary Vows declared Solemn. This occurred in 1473 when Pope Sixtus IV issued a statement of this fact. They were now like other religious with solemn vows. These soon developed into the Fourth Franciscan group in the Franciscan Family by the end of the 15th century.

4) The Rule of 1289 was adjusted for Religious. The Rule of 1289 was strictly for lay people. It had to be adjusted for religious. In 1521, Pope Leo X promulgated a Rule for all men and women living a community life. The Pope eliminated what was not suitable for religious in the Rule of Nicholas IV and adjusted it for religious. The Rule, however, did not make them independent. They were still not allowed to have their own major superiors because this was opposed by the Observants who did not want a Fourth Franciscan Order with its own central government. They were placed under the Observants by Pope St Pius V in 1568.

5) The Evolution is Halted. Pope St Pius V set the pattern for the next 300 years. Religious communities of women tertiaries which were not enclosed because of their charitable work were suppressed, that is, not recognized as religious, and were forbidden to accept new candidates. Thus, the evolution of female tertiaries was halted. The Council of Trent (1545 – 1563) gave a new direction to congregations of Franciscan Sisters. There were, at the time, "cloistered" (closed) and "uncloistered" (open) monasteries. Pope Pius V eliminated the "open" monasteries. From this time on most congregations accepted the cloister.

It would be going beyond the scope of this book to go into details about the gradual change of attitude of the Church towards women in particular being occupied in the works of charity that characterized the Third Order Regular in the beginning. I shall note only some of the principal phases:

In the 17th century, congregations devoted to works of active charity flourished. Founders did not seem concerned about solemn vows and cloister. They responded to the human needs of the sick and needy, of youth separated from faith and the proclamation of the Gospel. New types of Franciscan communities developed outside the enclosure. This continued in the 18th century with some restrictions and even repressions of some congregations by the Church. It was not until the 19th century that women began to be better recognized and the enormous good that they could achieve. But it was not until the end of the 19th century that restoration was achieved when Pope Leo XIII gave juridical status to a congregation of simple vows with the sole approval of the Bishop. Their constitutions divided them into diocesan or pontifical institutes.

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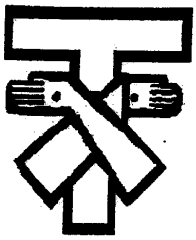
[93] Karecki & Wroblewski, op. cit.

It is important that all members of Franciscan Family know about each other in order to appreciate the gift we have of each other. I do hope that these few notes will help all achieve this ideal.



APPENDIX 1: THE EARLY AND LATE EXHORTATIONS

THE EARLY EXHORTATION	THE LATER ADMONITION & EXHORTATION
The words of St Francis to his followers **To the Brothers and Sisters of Penance** In the name of the Lord! [1]All who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength (cf. Mk 12:30), and love their neighbours as themselves (cf. Mt 22:39) [2]and hate their bodies with their vices and sins, [3]and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, [4]and produce worthy fruits of penance. [5]Oh, how happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, [6]because "the spirit of the Lord will rest upon them" (cf. Is 11:2) and he will make "his home and dwelling among them" (cf. Jn 14:23), [7]and they are the children of the heavenly Father (cf. Mt 5:45), whose works they do, and they are the spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 12:50). [8]We are spouses, when by the Holy Spirit the faithful soul is united with our Lord Jesus Christ. [9]We are brothers to him when we fulfil "the will of the Father who is in heaven" (Mt 12:50). [10]We are mothers, when we carry him in our heart and body (cf. 1 Cor 6:20) through divine love and a pure and sincere conscience; we give birth to him through a holy life which must give light to others by example (cf. Mt 5:16). [11]O, how glorious it is to have a great and holy Father in heaven! [12]O how glorious it is to have such a beautiful and admirable Spouse, the Holy Paraclete. [13]O, how glorious it is to have such a Brother and such a Son, loved, beloved, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable, and desirable above all: Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave	**To the Brothers and Sisters of Penance** [1]In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Brother Francis, their servant and subject, sends esteem and reverence, true peace from heaven and sincere love in the Lord to all Christian religious people: clergy and laity, men and women, and to all who live in the whole world. [2]Because I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer the fragrant words of my Lord to them. [3]Therefore, realizing that I could not visit each one of you personally because of sickness and the weakness of my body, I decided to offer you in this letter and message the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are *spirit and life.* [4]The most high Father made known from heaven through His holy angel Gabriel this Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb He received the flesh of our humanity and frailty. [5]Though He was rich, He wished, together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, to choose poverty in the world beyond all else. [6]And as His Passion was near, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and taking bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, saying: *Take and eat. This is my Body.* [7]And taking the cup He said: *This is my Blood of the New Covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.* [8]Then He prayed to His Father, saying: *Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me.* [9]*And His sweat became as drops of blood falling on the ground.* [10]Nevertheless, He placed His will in the will of His Father, saying: *Father, let Your will be done; not as I will but as You will.* [11]His Father's will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: [12]*not for Himself through Whom all things were made, but for our sins,* [13]leaving us an example that we might follow His footprints. [14]And He wishes all of us to be saved through Him and receive Him with our heart pure and our body chaste. [15]But, even though His yoke is easy and His burden light, there are few who wish to receive Him and be saved through Him. [16]Those who do not wish to taste how sweet the Lord is and who love the *darkness more than the light,* not wishing to fulfil God's commands, are cursed; [17]it is said of them by the prophet: *Cursed are those who stray from your commands.* [18]But how happy and blessed are those who love God and do as the Lord Himself says in the Gospel: *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself.* [19]Let us love God, therefore, and adore Him with a pure heart and a pure mind, because He Who seeks this above all things has said: *True adorers adore the Father in Spirit and Truth.* [20]*For all who adore Him must adore Him in the Spirit of truth.* [21]*And day and night let us direct praises and prayers to Him, saying:* Our Father, Who art in heaven…for we should pray always and not become weary. [22]We must, of course, confess all our sins to a priest and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ from him. [23]Whoever does not eat His flesh and drink His blood *cannot enter the kingdom of God.* [24]But let him eat and drink worthily because anyone who receives *unworthily, not distinguishing, that is, not discerning, the Body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.* [25]In addition, let us produce worthy fruits of penance. [26]And let us love our neighbours as ourselves. [27]And if anyone does not want to love them as himself, let him at least not do them any harm, but let him do good.

up his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:15) and prayed to the Father saying:
[14] "O holy Father, protect them with your name (cf. Jn 17:11) whom you gave me out of the world. [15]I entrusted to them the message you entrusted to me and they received it. They have known that in truth I came from you, they have believed that it was you who sent me. [16]For these I pray, not for the world (cf. Jn 17:9). [17]Bless and consecrate them, and I consecrate myself for their sakes. [18]I do not pray for them alone; I pray also for those who will believe in me through their word (cf. Jn 17:20) that they may be holy by being one as we are (cf. Jn 17:11). [19]And I desire, Father, to have them in my company where I am to see this glory of mine in your kingdom" (cf. Jn 17:6-24).

Note: The following Chapter is not included in the Prologue to the SFO Rule.

Chapter 2: Those who do not do Penance

[1]All those men and women who are living in penance, [2]who do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, [3]who practice vice and sin and walk after the evil concupiscence and the evil desires of their flesh, [4]who do not observe what they have promised to the Lord, [5]and in their body serve the world through the desires of the flesh, the concerns of the world and the cares of this life: [6]They are held captive by the devil, whose children they are, and whose works they do. [7]They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ. [8]They do not possess spiritual wisdom because they do not have the Son of God, the true wisdom of the Father. [9]It is said of them; *Their wisdom has been swallowed up and Cursed are those who turn away from your commands.* [10]They see and acknowledge, know and do evil, and knowingly lose their souls. [11]See, you blind ones, deceived by your enemies: the flesh, the world, and the devil, because it is sweet for the body to sin and it is bitter to [28]Let whoever has received the power of judging others pass judgment with mercy, as they would wish to receive mercy from the Lord.
[29]*For judgment without mercy for those who have not shown mercy.*
[30]Let us, therefore, have charity and humility and give alms because it washes the stains of our sins from our souls. [31]For, although people lose everything they leave behind in this world, they, nevertheless, carry with them the rewards of charity and the alms they have given for which they will receive a reward and a fitting repayment from the Lord.
[32]We must also frequently visit churches and venerate and revere the clergy not so much for themselves, if they are sinners, but because of their office and administration of the most holy Body and Blood of Christ which they sacrifice upon the altar, receive and administer to others. [34]And let all of us know for certain that no one can be saved except through the holy words and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which the clergy pronounce, proclaim and minister. [35]And they alone must minister and not others. [36]Religious, however, who have left the world, are bound to do more and greater things, but not to overlook these.
[37]We must hate our bodies with their vices and sins because the Lord says in the Gospel: All evils, vices and sins *come from the heart.*
[38]We must love our enemies and of good to those who hate us. [39]We must observe the commands and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ.
[40]We must also deny ourselves and place our bodies under the yoke of servitude and holy obedience as each one has promised to the Lord. [41]And let no one be bound to obey another in anything in which a crime or sin would be committed.
[42]Instead, let the one to whom obedience has been entrusted and who is considered the *greater* be *the lesser* and *the servant of the other brothers.* [43]And let him have and show mercy to each of his brothers as he would want them to do to him were he in a similar position. [44]Let him not become angry at the fault of a brother but, with all patience and humility, let him admonish and support him.
[45]We must not be wise and prudent according to the flesh, but, instead, we must be simple, humble and pure. [46]And let us hold our bodies in scorn and contempt because, through our own fault, we are all wretched and corrupt, disgusting and worms, as the Lord says through the prophet: *I am a worm and not a man, the scorn of men and the outcast of the people.*
[47]We must never desire to be above others, but, instead, we must be servants and *subject to every human creature for God's sake.*
[48]And *the Spirit of the Lord will rest* upon all those men and women who have done and persevered in these things and It will make a home and *dwelling-place in them.* [49]And they will be the children of the heavenly Father, Whose works they do. [50]And they are spouses, brothers and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.
[51]We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. [52]We are brothers, moreover, when we do *the will of the Father Who is in heaven;* [53]mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through love and a pure and sincere conscience; and give Him birth through a holy activity, which must shine before others by example.
[54]O how glorious and holy and great to have a Father in heaven! [55]O how holy, consoling, beautiful and wonderful to have such a Spouse! [56]O how holy and how loving, gratifying, humbling, peace-giving, sweet, worthy of love, and above all things desirable it is to have such a Brother and such a Son: our Lord Jesus Christ, Who laid down His life for His sheep and prayed to His Father, saying:
Holy Father, save in your name those whom you have given me.
[57]*Father, all those whom you have given me in the world were yours and you have given them to me.* [58]*The words that you gave me, I have given to them; they have accepted them and known in truth that I have come from you and they have believed that you have sent me.*
I pray for them and not for the world; bless and sanctify them. [59]*I sanctify myself for them that they may be sanctified in being one as we are one.*
[60]*And I wish, Father, that where I am, they may be with me that they may see my glory in your kingdom.*

serve God, [12]for every vice and sin flow and proceed from the human heart as the Lord says in the Gospel. [13]And you have nothing in this world or in that to come. [14]And you think that you will possess this world's vanities for a long time, but you are deceived because a day and an hour will come of which you give no thought, which you do not know, and of which you are unaware when the body becomes weak, death approaches, and it dies a bitter death. [15]And no matter where, when, or how a person dies in the guilt of sin without penance and satisfaction, if he can perform an act of satisfaction and does not do so, the devil snatches his soul from its body with such anguish and distress that no one can know [what it is like] except the one receiving it.
[16]And every talent, ability, knowledge, and wisdom they think they have will be taken away from them. [17]And they leave their wealth to their relatives and friends who take and divide it and afterwards say: "May his soul be cursed because he could have given us more and acquired more than what he distributed to us." [18]Worms eat his body and so body and soul perish in this brief world and they will go to hell where they will be tortured forever.
[19]In the love which is God we beg all those whom these words reach to receive those fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ written above with divine love and kindness.
[20]And let whoever does not know how to read have them read to them frequently. [21]Because *they are spirit and life,* they should preserve them together with a holy activity to the end.
[22]And whoever has not done these things will be held accountable before the Tribunal of the Lord Jesus Christ on the day of judgment.

[61]Let every creature
in heaven, on earth, in the sea and in the depths,
give praise, glory, honour and blessing
To Him Who suffered so much,
Who has given and will give in the future every good,
[62]for He is our power and strength,
Who alone is good,
Who alone is almighty,
Who alone is omnipotent, wonderful, glorious
and Who alone is holy,
worthy of praise and blessing
through endless ages. Amen.

[63]All those, however, who are not living in penance, who do not receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, [64]who practice vice and sin and walk after evil concupiscence and wicked desires, who do not observe what they have promised, [65]and who serve the world with their bodies, the desires of the flesh, the cares and anxieties of this world, and the preoccupations of this life [66][all those] are deceived by the devil whose children they are and whose works they do. They are blind because they do not see the true light, our Lord Jesus Christ. [67]They do not have spiritual wisdom because they do not possess the Son of God, the true wisdom of the Father, within them. It is said of them: *Their wisdom has been swallowed up.* [68]They see, recognize, know, and do evil; and, knowingly, they lose their souls.
[69]See, you blind ones, deceived by your enemies, that is, the flesh, the world, and the devil, for it is sweet for the body to commit sin and bitter to serve God, because every evil, vice and sin flow and proceed from people's hearts, as the Lord says in the Gospel. [70]And you have nothing in this world or in that to come. [71]You think you possess the vanities of the world for a long time, but you are deceived because a day and an hour are coming of which you do not think, do not know, and are not aware.
[72]The body becomes weak, death approaches, relatives and friends come saying: "Put your affairs in order." [73]Look, his wife and children, relatives and friends pretend to cry. [74]Glancing about, he sees them weeping and is moved by an evil impulse. He says, thinking to himself, "See, I place my soul and body, all that I have in your hands." [75]In fact, that man is cursed who entrusts and places his soul and body and all he has in such hands; [76]for, as the Lord says through the prophet, *Cursed is the one who trusts in another.* [77]And immediately they make a priest come. The priest says to him: "Do you want to receive penance for all your sins?" [78]"I do," he responds. "Do you wish to make satisfaction, as far as you can, out of your wealth, for what you have done and the ways in which you have cheated and deceived people?" [79]"No," he responds. [80]"Why not?" the priest asks. "Because I have placed everything in the hands of my relatives and friends." [81]And the wretched man begins to lose his speech and so dies.
[82]But let everyone know that whenever and however someone dies in mortal sin without making amends when he could have [done so] and did not, the devil snatches his soul from his body with such anguish and distress that no one can know [what it is like] except the one experiencing it.
[83]And every talent and power and knowledge that he thought he had will be taken away from him. [84]And he leaves his relatives and friends and they take and divide his wealth and, afterwards, they say: "Let his soul be cursed because he could have given us more and acquired more than he distributed to us!"
[85]Worms eat his body and so he loses his body and soul in this brief world and goes to hell where he will be tortured without end.
[86]In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
[87]I, Brother Francis, your lesser servant, with a wish to kiss your feet, beg and implore you in the love that is God, to receive, to put into practice, and to observe, as you should, these words and the others of our Lord Jesus Christ with humility and love. [88]And may the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit bless all those men and women who receive them with kindness, understand them and send copies of them to others, if they have persevered to the end in them. Amen.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ***MEMORIALE PROPOSITI***

Here begins the Rule and Life of the Continent Brothers and Sisters:
In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

THE MEMORIAL *of what is proposed for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance living in their homes, begun in the year 1221, is as follows:*

Daily Life
1. The men belonging to this brotherhood shall dress in humble, undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six Ravenna soldi (coins) as well, unless for evident and necessary cause a temporary dispensation be given. And breadth and thinness of the cloth are to be considered in said price.
2. They are to wear their outer garments and furred coats without open throat, sewed shut or uncut, but certainly laced up, not open as secular people wear them; and they shall wear their sleeves closed.
3. The sisters in turn shall wear an outer garment and tunic made of cloth of the same price and humble quality; or at least they are to have with the outer garment a white or black underwrap or petticoat, or an ample lined gown without gathers, the price of an ell is not to exceed twelve Pisa denars. As to this price, however, and the fur cloaks they wear, a dispensation may be given according to the social standing of the woman and the custom of the place. They are not to wear silken or dyed veils and ribbons.
4. And both the brothers and sisters shall have their fur garments of lamb's wool only. They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread, and no other kind. Also, they shall lay aside any other vain ornaments at the bidding of the Visitor.
5. They are not to go to unseemly parties or to shows or dances. They shall not donate to actors and shall forbid their household to donate.

Abstinence
6. All are to abstain from meat save on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, except on account of illness or weakness, for three days at bloodletting, in travelling, or on account of an especially high feast intervening, namely, the Nativity for three days, New Year's, Epiphany, the Pasch of Resurrection for three days, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, St. John the Baptist, the Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, the solemnity of All Saints and of St. Martin.
On other days, when there is no fasting, they may eat cheese and eggs. But when they are with religious in their convents, they have leave to eat whatever is served to them.
And except for the feeble, the sick, and those travelling, let them be content with dinner and supper. Let the healthy be temperate in eating and drinking.
7. Before their dinner and supper let them say the Lord's Prayer once. Likewise, after their meal, and let them give thanks to God. Otherwise, let them say three Our Fathers.

Fasting
8. From the Pasch of the Resurrection to the Feast of All Saints they are to fast on Fridays. From the Feast of All Saints until Easter they are to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, while still observing the other fasts enjoined in general by the Church.
9. They are to fast daily, except on account of infirmity or any other need, throughout the Fast of St. Martin, from after said day until Christmas and throughout the greater fast from Carnival Sunday until Easter.
10. The sisters who are pregnant are to refrain, until their purification, from the corporal observances except those regarding their dress and prayers.
11. Those engaged in fatiguing work shall be allowed to take food three times a day from the Pasch of the Resurrection until the Dedication feast of St. Michael. And when they work for others it will be allowed them to eat everything served to them except on Fridays and on the fasts enjoined in general by the Church.
PRAYER
12. All are to say daily the canonical hours, that is, Matins, Prime, Tierce, Sext, None, Vespers and Compline. The clerics are to say them after the manner of the clergy. Those who know the psalter are to say the Deus in nomine tuo and the Beati immaculate up to the Legem pone for Prime and the other psalms of the Hours, with the Glory be to the Father; but when they do not attend church, they are to say for Matins the

psalms the Church says or any eighteen psalms; or at least to say the Our Father as do the unlettered at any of the Hours.
The others say twelve Our Fathers for Matins and for each of the other Hours seven Our Fathers with the Glory be to the Father after each one.
And those who know the Creed and the Miserere mei Deus should say it at Prime and Compline. If they do not say it at the Hours indicated, they shall say three Our Fathers.
13. The sick are not to say the Hours unless they wish.
14. All are to go to Matins in the fast of St. Martin and in the Great Fast unless inconvenience for persons or affairs should threaten.

The Sacraments, Other Matters
15. They are to make a confession of their sins three times a year and to receive Communion at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost.
They are to be reconciled with their neighbours and to restore what belongs to others. They are to make up for past tithes and to pay future tithes.
16. They are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.
17. They are to refrain from formal oaths unless where necessity compels, in the cases excepted by the Sovereign Pontiff in his indult, that is, for peace, for the Faith, under calumny, and in bearing witness.
18. Also in their ordinary conversations they will do their best to avoid oaths. And should anyone have sworn thoughtlessly through a slip of the tongue, as happens when there is much talking, lie should the evening of the same day, when he is obliged to think over what he has done, say three Our Fathers in amends of such oaths. Let each member fortify his household to serve God.

Special Mass and Meeting each Month
19. All the brothers and sisters of every city and place are to foregather each month at the time the Ministers see fit, in a church which the Ministers will make known, and there assist at Divine Services.
20. And every member is to give the treasurer one ordinary *denaro* (coin). The treasurer is to collect this money and distribute it on the advice of the Ministers among the poor brothers and sisters, especially the sick and those who may have nothing for their funeral services, and thereupon, among the other poor; and they are to offer something of their money to the aforesaid church.
21. And, if it be convenient at the time, they are to have some religious who is informed in the Word of God to instruct them and strengthen them to persevere in their penance and in performing the works of mercy. And except for their officers, they are to remain quiet during the Mass and sermon, intent on the Liturgy, on prayer and on the sermon.
22. Whenever any brother or sister happens to fall ill, the Ministers, if the patient let them know of it, shall in person or through others visit the patient once a week, and remind him of penance; and, if they find it expedient, they are to supply him from the common fund with what he may need for the body.
23. And, if the ailing person depart from this life, it is to be published to the brothers and sisters who may be present in the city or place so that they may gather for the funeral; and they are not to leave until Mass has been celebrated and the body consigned to burial.
Thereupon each member, within eight days of the demise, shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if he be a Priest; fifty psalms, if he understands the Psalter, or if not then fifty Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.
24. In addition, every year, for the welfare of the brothers and sisters living and dead, each priest is to offer three Masses, each member knowing the Psalter is to recite it, and the rest shall say one hundred Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.
25. All who have the right are to make their last will and make disposition of their goods within three months after their profession, lest anyone die intestate.
26. As regards making peace among the brothers and sisters or non-members at odds, let what the Ministers find proper be done, even, if it be expedient, upon consultation with the Lord Bishop.
27. If contrary to their rights and privileges, trouble is made for the brothers and sisters by the Mayors and Governors of the places where they live, the Ministers of the place shall do what they find expedient upon the advice of the Lord Bishop.
28. Let each member accept and faithfully exercise the ministry or other offices imposed on him, though anyone may retire from office after a year.

29. When anyone wishes to enter this brotherhood, the Ministers shall carefully inquire into his standing and occupation, and they shall explain to him the obligations of the brotherhood, especially that of restoring what belongs to others. And, if he is content with it, let him be vested according to the prescribed way. He must make satisfaction for his debts, paying money according to what pledged provision is given. They are to reconcile themselves with their neighbours and to pay up their tithes.
30. After these particulars are complied with, when the year is up and he seems suitable, let him on the advice of some discreet brothers be received on this condition: that he promise for his whole lifetime to observe everything written here, or to be written or abated on the advice of the brothers, unless on occasion there be a valid dispensation by the Ministers; and that he will, when called upon by the Ministers, render satisfaction as the Visitor shall ordain if he have done anything contrary to this condition. And this promise is to be put in writing then and there by a public notary. Even so, no one is to be received otherwise, unless in consideration of the estate and rank of the person it shall seem advisable to the Ministers.
31. No one is to depart from this brotherhood and from what is contained herein except to enter a religious Order.
32. No heretic or person in bad repute for heresy is to be received. If he is under such suspicion, he may be admitted if otherwise fit, upon being cleared by the bishop.
33. Married women are not to be admitted except with the consent and leave of their husbands.
34. Brothers and sisters expelled from the brotherhood as incorrigible are not to be received again except as it pleases the more prudent members of the brothers.

Correction, Dispensation, Officers

35. The Ministers of any city or place shall report public faults of the brothers and sisters to the Visitor for punishment. And, if anyone proves incorrigible, after consultation with some of the discreet brothers, he should be denounced to the Visitor to be expelled from the brotherhood and thereupon it should be published in the meeting. Moreover, if it is a brother he should be denounced to the Mayor or to the Governor.
36. If anyone learns that a scandal is occurring relative to brothers and sisters, he shall report it to the Ministers and shall have the opportunity to report it to the Visitor. He need not be held to report it in the case of husband against wife.
37. The Visitor has the power to dispense all the brothers and sisters in any of these points if he finds it advisable.
38. When the year has passed, the Ministers with the counsel of the brothers are to elect two other Ministers; and a faithful treasurer, who is to provide for the need of the brothers and sisters and other poor; and messengers who at the command of the Ministers are to publish what is said and done by the fraternity.
39. In all the above-mentioned points, no one is to be obliged under sin but only under penalty; yet so that, if after being admonished twice by the Ministers he should fail to discharge the penalty imposed or to be imposed upon him by the Visitor, he shall be obligated under guilt as contumacious.

APPENDIX 2: THE MEMORIALE 1221-1228

The "Ancient Rule", The First Rule of the Third Order, The Memorial of 1221-1228.[94]

1. The witness of poverty

The penitents were to wear poor and simple clothing to express humility of heart and their detachment from worldly goods or fashions (Chapter 1).
The brothers and sisters were to make a monthly contribution to carry on the Fraternity's work for the poor, the sick, and to provide funerals for the poor (Chapter VIII, 2).
They were to promptly make a final testament or a Will providing for the disposal of material goods to prevent discord and litigation among their relatives arising from greed (Chapter X).

2. The spirit of penance

This was indicated in their willingness to embrace the external signs of fast and abstinence. They were to abstain from meat four days each week and on particular vigils throughout the year (Chapter 11, 1-2).
There was a continuous fast from the feast of St. Martin until Christmas and from Ash Wednesday until Easter (Chapter III, 1); fasts on Wednesday and Friday from the Feast of All Saints until Easter (Chapter 11, 6, Chapter III, 4).
They renounced any participation in secular entertainments as shows, dances, feasts, etc. (Chapter 1, 7).

3. The life of prayer

They were to recite the Our Father before meals. Those who could not read to recite the seven canonical hours each day were to pray 54 Our Fathers with the Doxology (Chapter IV, 3 -4).
Community responsibility to recite Matins during the lent of St. Martin and the liturgical season of Lent (Chapter V, 1).
All the brothers and sisters of a local fraternity should come together once a month for to assist at Mass (Chapter VII, 1).
They were to arrange for a monthly religious instruction as a kind of encouragement to deepen their penitential commitment (Chapter VII, 3).
The deceased members were to be remembered by special suffrages (Chapter IX, 2-3).

4. Works of mercy

There were a number of practical obligations to encourage works of charity among the members of the fraternity.
They were to provide for weekly visits to sick brothers and sisters (Chapter VIII, 1).
They were to provide for any need material assistance to the sick of the fraternity.

5. Messengers of peace

Contrary to the custom of those troublesome times, the penitents refused to take up arms to cooperate in the countless small but deadly wars of their society. Further, they even refused to carry personal weapons of protection for these were seen as signs of force and indicated a readiness for violence (Chapter VI,4). It was equivalent to the conscientious objection of modern society.

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[94] *Upon reading it for the first time, the text may seem quite disappointing and seems to have nothing of Francis' penitential spirituality in it. However, we must remember that it was written to express in the canonical language of that time a description of these Brothers and Sisters of Penance. A deeper examination will give up the Franciscan spirituality contained within it.*

They were willing to take oaths only when it would contribute to the cause of peace (Chapter VI, 4). They pledged themselves ready to restore peace among the brothers and sisters of the fraternity as well as among others (Chapter X, 2).
Before entrance into the Order of Penance, they were obliged to be reconciled with their neighbours (Chapter X, 6).

APPENDIX 3: RULE OF NICHOLAS IV

THE RULE APPROVED IN THE *SUPRA* MONTEM.

The Rule approved on August 18, 1289 in the Bull Supra Motenm by the Franciscan Pope Nicholas IV preserves substantially, although with important juridical modifications, the original text given by St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of the Order of Penance. Therefore, we can easily conclude that this evolution of the Rule does not betray the genuine spirit of the Seraphic Founder but officially expressed the Church's approval of that spirit.

The establishment of the "Third Order" was the realization of an ardent desire of St. Francis to extend the religious life to people living in the world, adaptable to their varied conditions. To strive toward a greater Christian perfection according to the norms set down by the Holy Founder and approved by the ecclesiastical authorities was a committment that devout Penitents assumed with enthusiasm. The evangelical spirit of Francis found its most authentic expression in the Third Order which, perhaps, better embodies the ecumenical concerns of the Saint and re-echoes the beats of his seraphic heart.

The soul of the Franciscan Third Order consists in a spirit of penance, of humility, of self denial, of prayer, but most of all, of love. It is precisely love which, while causing one to strive toward God with ardor, detaches the heart of the Penitent from the passing goods of the earth. Poverty, characteristic of Franciscan life, is itself the fruit of love, of an ever greater love. To embody the evangelical spirit and to reproduce the example of Christ represents the ideal of every follower of the Poverello enrolled in his Third Order. And that this has not been a utopian state or a pipe dream, the history of seven centuries is a clear witness!

The Rule of the Franciscan Third Order, notwithstanding its brevity, has won universal admiration not only in the religious sense but also in the strictly human sense. Roman Pontiffs, experts in spirituality, legislators, historians, sociologists, statisticians, etc. unanimously have expressed their unconditional appreciation for this form of the seraphic life. And the secret of such agreement over the course of centuries lies in the fact that the Rule of the Third Order, imbued with the eternal principles of the Gospel, resonates completely with the spiritual and unchangeable needs of the people of God on pilgrimage on the roads of earth towards the future glory of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The global themes, addressed by the Rule of Nicholas IV to encourage a more intense spirituality in the followers of the Third Rule can be summarized in a few essential points. It should be mentioned that the norms given to the Penitents by the Pope can be classified according to three levels: precepts, formal counsels, and admonitions or exhortations, optional elements left to the initiative and spiritual generosity of each member.

1. The love for poverty and the struggle against greed

Although the Penitents did not expressly profess the three vows, nevertheless they are held to live the spirit of the vows. The unbridled attachment to passing worldly goods is the cause of many sins and the root of all evils.(l Tim.6,10) The goods of this world often cause forgetfulness of the treasures of heaven. Those who do not detach their hearts from what they possess, Jesus affirms, "cannot be My followers." (Lk. 14, 33). In fact, " It is easier for a heavy rope to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. " (Mt. 19, 24) The Rule of the Franciscan Third Order warns against the dangers represented by riches: though not obliging the renunciation of earthly goods as in the case of religious, it does demand that the heart be kept unfettered of them. And, in order that such detachment be effective and lasting, the Rule obliges the Tertiaries to draw up a Will as soon as possible.

In conformity with this spirit of detachment, the Brothers and Sisters of Penance should abstain from excessive comfort, from superfluous luxury and from worldly elegance which are the great evils of our own century (cfr. Chapters 3 and 9). The savings obtained by limiting oneself to the real

necessities of life according to one's state in life should be distributed to the poor who have a right to whatever is superfluous (Lk. 11,41).

2. The love of the cross and the struggle against sensuality

The first struggle every person endures as soon as he achieves an awareness of life is the struggle against the desire of the senses which demand insistently the forbidden fruit. In such a situation, the only way to preserve innocence is to take hold of the cross. To control the impulses of the heart and the body, to deny undisciplined desires, to impose on oneself sacrifices and denial is the duty of whoever wants to to have in Christ the inheritance of heaven. The Rule on this point requires, not only modesty in dress (Chapter III) but also the refusal to assist at immodest celebrations and shows (Chapter IV), the practice of fast and abstinence (Chapter V), of going to confession and communion (Chapter VI) and most of all, the practice of regular daily prayer (Chapter VIII).
The Rule does not demand heroic penance but a renunciation that is possible for everyone and a spirit of penance that is constant, that is to be practiced every day. To carry one's cross for the love of Christ is the condition of glory. It is precisely because of its love of the Cross that the Franciscan Third Order was called from its very beginning the "Order of Penance." And penance has remained over the centuries the unchangeable hallmark of its fidelity to the spirit of its Founder.

3. Humility and the struggle against pride

Pride, affirms the Bible, is the root of every evil (Eccl. 10: 15). Pride is often the prevailing value in society. To appear rich, important and content is the dangerous temptation of every person in this world. To seek honors, to desire to be served is tile claim of people of the world. All this is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel.
Following the reaching of Christ, the Rule approved by Nicholas IV teaches the spirit of Humility which ought to express itself concretely in serving God, in obeying those in authority, and in loving the brothers.

a.) The service of God

In their relationship to God, the penitents should not be content with doing what is strictly necessary as most Christians do. The Rule urges them to be generous and persevering. It encourages a faith that does not doubt, a loyalty to God joined together with a humble mind and a burning heart. The Tertiaries were given directives to aid them to establish a deeper relationship with God than the ordinary Christian. For the Rule, the precept of the Church to receive the Sacraments once a year was not sufficient but they were to approach the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist also on the Feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost (Chapter VI). Nor was it sufficient for the Franciscan Penitent to recite morning and evening prayers as does the good Christian. Rather, in imitation of the priests and religious, the Tertiaries were bound to recite daily the seven canonical hours. Those unable to recite the Hours of the Liturgy should offer instead *12 Our Fathers and Glory be to the Father* for Matins and 7 for each other canonical hour. (Chapter VIII) The Brothers and Sisters were to recite an *Our Father* before and after each meal so that they might live throughout each day in continual and intimate union with God. It is important to point out here how the Rule of Nicholas IV (Chapter XI) repeats from the original *Propositum Vitae* (Chapter 6, no. 5 Capistrano- Collection) the clear exhortation to all the Penitents to close their day with an Examination of Conscience, a practice which was to become one of the most efficacious means of holiness of religious spirituality. Nor should it be sufficient for Tertiaries to assist at Mass on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation but, in so far as possible, they should assist at Mass every day.

b.) Attitude towards superiors

One sincere expression of the love of God is humble obedience to superiors who are His representatives in the government of human society. The Rule takes for granted that every Tertiary gives the obedience owed to his superiors: the youth to his parents, the wife to her husband, the servant to his master, and everyone to the legitimate civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The Rule speaks expressly of the obedience owed by the Brothers and Sisters to the superiors of the Order: the Visitator (Chapters XVI & XIX) and to the Ministers (Chapter XV & XIX). A sincere and humble obedience is still the most effective medicine against pride.

c.) Relationship with the Brothers and Sisters

The Rule, as if to remove from the soul the last vestige of pride which always contrasts one person against another, reminds the Tertiary of the greatest commandment of the Lord Jesus: to love one another mutually as He has shown us by His words and own example. To be a brother in Christ and St. Francis is the fundamental relationship of life for the followers of the Third Rule. Charity is the soul of Christianity: seraphic love is the basic characteristic of Franciscanism. The Brothers and Sisters were to live in an atmosphere of Christian and Franciscan love. To love one another, for each member to seek the good of the other; for all together to seek the Glory of God -- this is *the forma vitae,* the lifestyle of the Tertiary. And this characteristic dynamic of seraphic love directing them all towards God the Father with sentiments of children makes of the Penitents brothers and sisters. To continue living in this spirit of fraternity, the Tertiaries are held to respect justice (Chapter II), to remain in mutual harmony to visit the sick of the Fraternity (Chapter XIV), to pray for the departed members (Chapter XIV), to offer alms generously for the benefit of the poor brothers and sisters and for the sick and departed whenever there should be a need (Chapter XIII).

CONCLUSION:

These concepts of Franciscan Spirituality taken from the Rule approved by Nicholas IV are not a new idea in the life of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. Rather, this Rule keeps all its freshness and vitality because it is in strict continuity with the spirit of the original propositum *vitae* which flowed from the mind and heart of the Seraphic Founder. In the Rule of Nicholas IV, the same spirit of Francis is alive, though in a form that is more canonical and systematic. In it we still see the living ideal which St. Francis proposed to the Penitents from the very beginning; there still pulsates his universal love directed towards God and the Brethren. In the millions of followers of this Franciscan penitential movement, God's Minstrel sings in each passing century the beautiful Canticle of love in all its richness.

Fr. Lino Temperini, T.O.R.

APPENDIX 4: LEO XIII: RULE OF THE THIRD ORDER OF ST. FRANCIS

Promulgated May 30, 1883, by Pope Leo XIII. The English text of the rule is the text prescribed as the standard version by the Very Rev. Provincials of the United States at the Second National Congress of the Third Order, New York, October 3-6, 1926.

Chapter I: Reception, Novitiate, and Profession

1. Only those may be received as members who have completed their fourteenth year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all the tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the Apostolic See.

2. Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent, unless their confessor judges otherwise.

3. The members shall wear the small scapular and the cord as prescribed; if they do not, they deprive themselves of the rights and privileges of the Order.

4. All who enter the Order must pass the first year in probation; then they shall duly make their profession upon the Rule of the Order, pledging themselves to observe the Commandments of God and of the Church, and to render satisfaction if they have failed against their profession.

Chaper II: Rule of Life

1. In all things let the members of the Third Order avoid extremes of cost and style, observing the golden mean suited to each one's station in life.

2. Let them with the utmost caution keep away from dances and shows which savor of license, as well as from all forms of dissipation.

3. Let them be temperate in eating and drinking, and devoutly say grace before and after meals.

4. They shall fast on the Vigil of the Immaculate Conception and on that of St. Francis; they are to be highly commended who, according to the original Rule of the Tertiaries, also either fast on Fridays or abstain from flesh meat on Wednesdays.

5. They shall approach the Sacraments of Penance and of the Holy Eucharist every month.

6. Tertiaries among the clergy, since they recite the Divine Office daily, shall be under no further obligation in this regard. Lay members who recite neither the Canonical Hours, nor the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary, shall say daily twelve Our Fathers, Hail Marys, and Glorys, unless they are prevented by ill health.

7. Let those who are entitled to make a last will and testament, do so in good time.

8. In their daily life let them strive to lead others by good example and to promote practiceso piety and good works. Let them not allow books or publications that are a menace to virtue, to be brought into their homes, or to be read by those under their care.

9. Let them earnestly maintain the spirit of charity among themselves and towards others. Let them strive to heal discord wherever they can.

10. Let them never take an oath except when necessary. Let them never use indecent language or vulgar jokes, Let them examine their conscience every night whether they have offended in this regard; if they have, let them repent and correct their fault.

11. Let those who can do so, attend Mass every day. Let them attend the monthly meetings called by the Prefect.

12. Let them contribute according to their means to a common fund, from which the poorer members may be aided, especially in time of sickness, or provision may be made for the dignity of Divine worship.

13. Let the officers either personally visit a sick member, or send someone to perform the services of charity. In case of serious illness let them remind and urge the sick person to arrange in time the affairs of his soul.

14. At the funeral of a deceased member the resident and visiting Tertiaries shall assemble and say in common five decades of the Rosary for the soul of the departed. Moreover, let the priests at the Holy Sacrifice and the lay members, if possible, having received Holy Communion, pray with fervent charity for the eternal rest of the deceased.

Chapter III: Offices, Visitation, and the Rule Itself

1. The offices shall be conferred at a meeting of the members. The term of these offices shall be three years. Let no one without good reason refuse an office tendered him, and let no one discharge his office negligently.

2. The Visitor, who is charged with the supervision of the Order, shall diligently investigate whether the Rule is properly observed. Therefore it shall be his duty to visit the Frternities every year, or oftener if need be, and hold a meeting, to which all the officers and members shall be summoned. Should the Visitor recall a member to his duty by admonition or command, or impose a salutary penance, let such member meekly accept the correction and not refuse to perform the penance.

3. The Visitors are to be chosen from the First Franciscan Order or from the Third Order Regular, and shall be appointed by the provincial or local superiors when requested. Laymen cannot hold the office of Visitor.

4. Disobedient and harmful members shall be admonished of their duty a second and a third time; if they do not submit, let them be dismissed from the Order.

5. Those who offend against any provision of this Rule, do not incur the guilt of sin, unless in so doing they also transgress the Commandments of God or of the Church.

6. Should a just and serious cause prevent a member from observing any provisions of the Rule, such person may be dispersed therefrom, or the purpose the ordinary superiors of the First and the Third Order Regular, as also the aforesaid Visitors, shall have full power.

APPENDIX 5: OUTLINE OF THE SFO RULE OF PAUL VI
(and brief commentary)[95]

PROLOGUE: (Letter to All the Faithful)

Chapter 1: Concerning Those Who Do Penance (i.e. Concerning persons turned towards God)
Those who follow the teaching and footsteps of Christ (disciple) and lives in union with Christ. This requires constant renewal, awareness of God's power & presence & the promise of eternal happiness. This can be achieved by participation in the Eucharist which brings about union with each other and helps one to mirror Christ.

Chapter 2: Concerning Those Who Don't Do Penance (i.e. they refuse God's grace)
These lack wisdom, light and joy; they are unhappy here on earth and hereafter and need our prayers for conversion.

THE SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER RULE

Chapter 1: The SFO
- The SFO is a genuine Order in the Church and part of the Franciscan Family, and shares the history of the Order itself;
- As a member of the Franciscan Family, it is united to God's people through the Holy Spirit and the following of Christ;
- It is the bearer of a special "charism" expressed in a variety of ways;
- This Rule allows its members to adapt to various modern conditions.

Chapter 2: The Way of Life
(This is a thorough, detailed description of the Secular Franciscan way of life. It offers a program for evangelization)

1) **Gospel Living in the Franciscan Tradition (4 – 6)** This is the heart of the Rule: to live in union with Christ in the spirit of St Francis.
2) **Conversion & Worship –** These are the necessary pre-conditions of Gospel life (7 – 8) The secular Franciscan seeks out the living and active person of Christ especially through Eucharist, Scripture and the Church. He/she must seek on-going change of heart and seek to worship the Father as a central element in his/her life, especially through the Eucharist.
3) **Sharing Christ's Mission through life in the Church** The secular Franciscan brings to those around him/her the living Christ that he/she has experienced. They become a "living Gospel". This evangelization is based on obedience to the Holy Spirit & creatively exercise their mission.
4) **The Manner of Proclaiming the Gospel (10, 14)**
Note that Mary is set up as a Model of Gospel Living – a Franciscan characteristic:
The First Phase of Evangelization shows how the secular Franciscan can live in this world (10 – 12)
1) Those who go "from Gospel to life" have simple living (10 – 12)
An experience of togetherness (13) and Selfless service (14) as qualities of everyday living.

***Note**: **Simple living** starts with a choice to unite with Christ, ready to suffer for him; reducing material needs; curbing longing for material things or power; using God's gifts generously, with justice and moderation. This results in Gospel Poverty.*

Gospel poverty for secular Franciscans is acquiring property justly, reduce wants to a minimum; what you have is given keep as custodians to benefit others.
2) **In Christ, all are equally brothers and sisters** (13) No room for prejudice or exclusiveness. Discover Christ in everyone.

[95] Official commentary by Benet Fonck, OFM, National Spiritual Assistants' Commission.

3) **A sense of community leads to selfless service.** (14) Use talents, competence and responsibility to bring others to experience God and hope to achieve full humanity.

The Second Phase of Evangelization (15 – 19) deals with concrete action.

1) **Social Justice** (15) as individuals and as communities to be promoted in both private and public life even as an organized group to demonstrate our faith.
2) **Our attitude to work** (16) Secular Franciscan discovers in our workaday world the arena for salvation & exemplifies the saving Christ to others. See all work as a blessing, sharing in creative power of the Father, renews with the Son and brings love with the Holy Spirit. Reshape values.
3) **Family Life** is God-given basic unit of human society. It is a miniature of world redeemed by Christ. Franciscan oriented families present a renewed world of love & dignity. Special role in God's plan.
4) **Ecology** is the relationship of creatures with themselves and their environment. (18) Francis saw all creation as symbol the union of God with his people. It is sacred. Secular Franciscan has great respect for creation & use of natural resources.
5) **Peace-making.** This is truly a Franciscan ministry. Peace grows out of personal integrity and harmony with others & discovery of God's presence everywhere. Affirm oneself and see others as God's gift and revealers of God's love. Positive approach. Non-violence & largeness of heart. Preparation for sister death.

Chapter 3: Life in Fraternity.(20 – 26)

1) Fraternity

Ordinarily, gospel life of secular Franciscan is developed and sustained within the framework of an organized community, called a fraternity in each locality.

The SFO is divided into Fraternities at various levels: local, regional, national and international. Each has its own moral personality in the Church. These are all united through the Rule and Constitutions.

"Fraternity" is the main characteristic of the SFO at all levels. It must have its own fraternal spirit & style. The fraternity is bound together by its elected ministers. **Local Fraternity is the basic living organism of the SFO (22).**

2) Formation

The importance of initial orientation (23) includes instruction and experience directed towards a life-time commitment in the Order. Note the important role of the Council in developing community, especially for new members. Hence note responsibilities of the Council.

3) The Means to express a strong & lasting fraternity:

- Regular and frequent meetings to build fraternity with prayer, education, apostolic activity, dialogue and leisure;
- Continuing education in Franciscanism and Church life for spiritual growth;
- A vigorous Council to enliven the fraternity. It should meet regularly.
- Voluntary contributions of the members to finance the fraternity's spiritual and material needs according to means available & agreed arrangements; also support the other levels of the fraternity: regional, provincial, national, and international;

4) Spiritual Assistance of clergy and religious. Need for friars to share fellowship and their Franciscan vocation with the secular Franciscans. Three implications:

a) Since SFO is a lay Order, the laity themselves are primarily responsible for their own spiritual growth & have duty to get assistance to achieve this;

b) Spiritual Assistants should have a good background in Franciscanism & 2 Vatican Council; especially the role of the laity; & willingness to share their vocation;

c) The official visit to the fraternity be given a two-fold role: Spiritual growth is ensured through pastoral visitation by a Franciscan friar; organizational development is provided by the fraternal visitation of a higher lay leader.

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