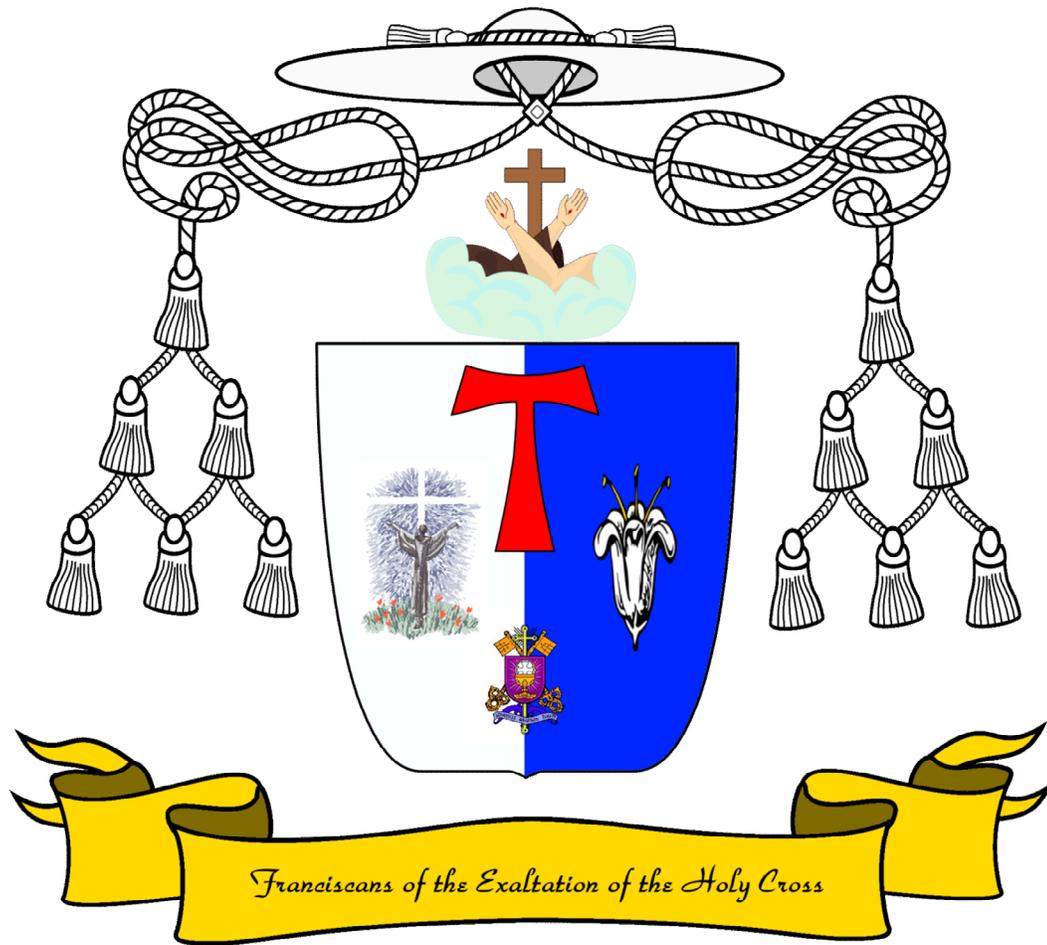


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# *Franciscans of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross*

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*A Manual of Readings in Franciscan Spirituality*



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## Franciscans of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

### A Franciscan Religious Order of the Old Catholic Apostolic Church

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May the Lord Give you Peace!

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you all to our program of Studies within the family that is Exaltation Franciscans. We are a small, yet growing religious community within the Old Catholic Apostolic Church and are pleased that you have begun this journey of faith with us.

As with all organizations, structure gives us form and it is necessary to properly form our Franciscan Identity in order that we might "take up our Cross and follow Him (Jesus)". Some might scoff at such "form and structure" as unnecessary, but we all know that the scriptures explicitly state, "All things are to be done in right order..." Our Holy Father, St. Francis of Assisi was a man under authority and was obedient to Holy Church in all things. Though he pushed the envelope often and argued mightily in defense of the poor and against the secular values of his time, he did so in strict obedience to his superiors. The psalmist cries out "obedience is better than sacrifice" and so we are an Order of Religious under the authority of our Bishops seeking to fulfill the command of the Lord to Francis in 1205..."Francis, go rebuild my Church which, as you see, is falling into ruins."

Now, how then do we fulfill this command today? Through proper formation we set a strong foundation upon which to build. First, we must develop in ourselves a true Franciscan Identity, a love for all things God has created; a compassion for the suffering, desire to boldly venture into places filled with darkness to bring the light of Christ there, to illuminate and lead those bound, forth into the freedom of fellowship with Jesus Christ. Secondly, we must realize the presence of Christ in everyone we meet, especially those who are opposed to the work of Christ. We must see in others the Lord we serve. Thirdly, we must at all times and in every place be foot washers, servants to all, the least for those who indeed are the least, lost and lonely, for in them we will find Christ and serve him best.

So, now that we have established why we need to be properly formed, let us get to the task of forming ourselves after Christ Jesus in order to further His kingdom and make it visible to all. Moreover, let us remember the command of our Seraphic Father, St. Francis of Assisi: Preach always and where necessary use words!

Pax Et Bonum,

+EDMUND  
Minister General, FEHC  
Metropolitan Bishop, OCAC USA



## The Seven Basic Franciscan Values

1. Conversion to and love of Jesus Christ, His Gospel and His Church.
2. A Christocentric theology accenting the primacy of love.
3. An Incarnational emphasis as seen in the crib, cross and the Eucharist, and our Lady's participation in this mystery.
4. Lived experience of the Triune God in prayer and contemplation.
5. Hope, optimism and the goodness of God and His creatures.
6. Fraternity and peace through Reconciliation with Christ and one another.
7. Solidarity, as lesser brothers and sisters, with, among and in service to the Poor.

### Christ-Centered

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Franciscan Spirituality is an incarnational, earthy spirituality; God is close to Creation, not far away, "up there." As St. Bonaventure put it, God bends down to us, lifting us up. Franciscan Spirituality reveres the Eucharist as the humility of God for us.

### Faithful to the Gospel and the Church

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Franciscan Spirituality includes as a fundamental component obedience and loyalty to the Church and Magisterium. Franciscan Spirituality has an engaging, inviting stance toward the world encouraging dialogue along with a healthy and prophetic critique of modern secular culture and its values.

### Rooted in Prayer, Contemplation, and Service

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Franciscan Spirituality hinges on the synthesis of action and contemplation; prayer leads to work and ministry, work and ministry bring us back to prayer. Contemplation is the impetus for mission. Franciscan Spirituality understands authority and obedience in terms of mutual service, not submission or domination. Franciscan Spirituality embraces and supports the growth and development of the arts and sciences in dialogue with Revelation and Faith.

### Committed to Upholding the Dignity of All of Creation

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Franciscan Spirituality has a profound reverence for the human person as one made in the Image and Likeness of God and values and esteems Creation as Brother and Sister, reflections of God's Goodness and Glory. Franciscan Spirituality understands that Creation and the World, despite the impact of Sin, remain fundamentally Good as Gifts from God. In its witness to Fraternity has an appreciation of and reverence for the individual within the global community. Franciscan Spirituality acknowledges the

necessity of human work and strives to uphold the value of human labor and the dignity of workers; it insists on a commitment to social justice by striving for solidarity with the poor and marginalized the powerless and the voiceless as images of Christ Crucified. Franciscan Spirituality seeks to give concrete expression of and commitment to global and local peacemaking by seeking and initiating the process of reconciliation.

### Vocabulary Building:

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In order to understand what we are reading and to be able to discuss through essay these Values we need to build a Franciscan Vocabulary if you will.

*Conversion: the act of converting : the process of being converted, something converted from one use to another*

As we can see in these definitions, conversion implies action. It is the act of moving from one idea, thought or belief to another. It is a change from one way of doing or behaving to another. For us it is literally “selling out to Jesus Christ”. We were used, ruled by the world, flesh and devil...now through *conversion* we are ruled and used by Jesus Christ through his LOVE.

*Gospel: Literally the “Good News”.*

The message taught by Jesus Christ and recorded by the Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Formative teachings of Jesus passed down by the Fathers and Mothers of the Church.

*The Church: The Body of Christ on Earth.*

All members of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Organization lead by the Patriarchs: Bishops, Priests and Laity which form the VISABLE Kingdom of God on Earth.

*Christocentric: Christ centered.*

A way of thought centered on Christ and flowing from Christ.

*Theology: the study of religious faith, practice, and experience; especially: the study of God and of God's relation to the world*

*Incarnational: the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form, the union of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ, a concrete or actual form of a quality or concept; especially: a person showing a trait or typical character to a marked degree <she is the incarnation of goodness>; the act of incarnating : the state of being incarnate*

*Contemplation: concentration on spiritual things as a form of private devotion, a state of mystical awareness of God's being, an act of considering with attention : study, the act of regarding steadily*

*Fraternity: For our purposes, "brother/sisterhood". Our identity as a family in Christ and St. Francis*

*Reconciliation: (formal) the act of causing two people or groups to become friendly again after an argument or disagreement (eg.) Christ has made peace between God and Man through his death on the Cross.*

*(Solidarity) a feeling of unity between people who have the same interests, goals, etc.*

Franciscan Values Exercise:

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Please read each of the definitions of the Vocabulary words provided, then, re-read the Seven Franciscan values. Spend a day this next week, beginning on Sunday studying each value one day. Write a page of your thoughts on each one and what it means to you personally. Remember, there are NO WRONG ANSWERS! This exercise is intended to help you form your thoughts on each KEY VALUE. Your Mentor will have one on one discussion with each of you to help better understand and integrate each value into your daily walk with Christ and the Order.



## LIFE OF ST FRANCIS

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The Life of Saint Francis, written in 1228-1229 by Friar Thomas of Celano, is the first written account of the life of St Francis and is a main source of the many biographies of the Poverello written since.

It is recommended that the Postulant read this account during the time of postulancy in preference to any other biography of St Francis. He may find the time to read another biography as well, and to compare it with Celano's account.

Reading this work can be the Postulant's introduction to the first volume of Francis of Assisi: Early Documents (FA:ED). The following notes are mainly a summary of the Introduction to Celano's work, on pages 173 to 178.

The Life is more a theological construct than a strictly historical account, when judged by modern tenets of history.

The author captures the original enthusiasm of a fresh new movement in the Church on the occasion of the canonization of St Francis.

St Clare of Assisi, Brother Elias and Cardinal Hugolino, feature strongly in the account. Clare was still a young woman when Thomas was writing in 1228. He heaps high praise on her and on the Poor Ladies of San Damiano. Brother Elias enjoyed Francis's high esteem and deep affection, and received a special blessing from the dying Saint. Hugolino, before becoming Pope Gregory IX, was made the Cardinal Protector of the infant Franciscan fraternity in 1220 and did much to nurture it, through his intellectual gifts and political weight.

Pope Gregory IX intended that The Life of St Francis would promote the cult of the Saint whom he canonized in 1228. Accordingly, Celano situates Francis in the age-old tradition of Christian sanctity. He did not write this account about Francis for the friars

or at their request, but rather he served the Pope's aim to promote spiritual renewal throughout the Church.

Thomas followed the standard pattern at the time of writing a saint's life. He aligns Francis with the greatest and most popular saints, such as St Martin of Tours, and draws out the parallels in Francis's life and theirs. He stresses the experience that they had in common, of conversion through hearing and heeding the Word of God. He presents St Francis as rebuilding the life of the Church on its ancient foundations, namely, the Blessed Virgin, the apostles and the martyrs, symbolized by the three chapels that he physically restored.

Celano, from his personal experience of Francis, includes specific biographical and historical facts. He gathered these facts also from living witnesses, including Clare. Consequently, *The Life of Saint Francis* is a primary historical source and not merely the application of a set formula for writing saints' lives.

However, Thomas's primary purpose in writing this *Life* was not to recount historical events about Francis and his companions. St Francis was canonized already and belonged to the universal Church. Celano had to announce the new Saint to the world.

Thomas structured his work into three books that follow in chronological order, first until 1223, then covering the last three years of Francis's life, 1224 to 1226, followed by the collection of miracles that was read at his canonization in 1228.

Book one focuses on Francis's life: his conversion, teaching and example. He lived and preached the humility of the Incarnation. The Church and all creation is renewed because the Word made flesh comes to life again in the life of Francis, most strikingly at the crib at Greccio.

Book Two focuses on another aspect of Francis's life. He lived and preached also the charity of Christ's Passion. The Word made flesh and crucified comes to life again in the body of Francis, supremely on Mount Alverna.

Book Three differs from the previous two books in its literary style and in its function. It recounts miraculous events in the Church after the death of Francis. It flows from the first two books as a Pentecost experience after the Crucifixion. The universal Church reaps the fruit of Francis's conversion and his conformity to Christ Crucified. Healing, deliverance and joy abound.

The Postulant can read *The Life of Saint Francis* from a number of perspectives. He can discern the aims of the Pope in commissioning the work; he can compare it with other lives of the saints, especially that of St Martin of Tours and discover a common formula; he can look for historical elements.

But those are secondary perspectives. The Postulant can read *The Life of St Francis* to nourish his spiritual formation, to catch the spirit of St Francis that Celano wanted the whole world to catch. He can accept Thomas of Celano's invitation to experience, as Francis did, a love that will transform him into the image of the incarnate Word and Christ Crucified, in union with God, his all-loving Father.

### Vocabulary Building Exercise:

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Please re-read the article above and, using a highlighter, select any words or phrases you do not know. Look them up using the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Add these words and their definitions to your Vocabulary List.

### FRANCIS, "FOUNDER" OF THE THREE ORDERS

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On October 4, the Roman Seraphic Liturgy celebrates the solemnity of Our Holy Father, Francis of Assisi, Deacon, and Founder of the Three Orders. The reference is to the Order of Friars Minor, the Order of the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, and better known as Poor Clare nuns and the Order of Penance for secular people. "Secular" includes both clergy and laity.

Thomas of Celano, in *The Life of Saint Francis (FA:ED I, p. 216-7)*, wrote, "through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved. Furthermore, to all he gave a norm of life and to those of every rank he sincerely pointed out the way of salvation."

The "triple army" may refer to the three ranks of the medieval Church, clergy, religious, and laity, or to the three Franciscan Orders, Lesser Brothers, Poor Ladies, and secular Penitents. The text clearly confirms that St Francis gave a rule or norm of life to all three entities. On the strength of such an early witness, in 1228, and of many other documents, all three Orders claim that they were founded by St Francis.

There can be no doubt that St Francis founded the First Order of the Friars Minor. Not only did he give his friars a way of life by his lived example but he also compiled an earlier Rule between 1209 and 1221, and wrote a later Rule in 1223, which was sealed by Pope Honorius III.

St Clare gave her Sisters a way of life also by her lived example and she wrote a Rule for them that was sealed by Pope Innocent IV in 1253. She qualifies without a doubt as the foundress of the Poor Clare's. However, she asserted in the very first line of her Rule that "Blessed Francis established" "the form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters."

Some would conclude that this statement does not assert that St Francis was the “founder” of the Second Order.

The question is raised whether St Francis was strictly the “founder” of the Order of Penitents, later called the secular Third Order, and out of which the Third Order Regular also developed. After his conversion in 1205, he did not live the life of a secular person. Although he was spiritual father to a host of secular people, he did not write a Rule for them that was sealed by a Pope. The first such Rule for them was written and sealed by Pope Nicholas IV in 1289.

The friars of the Third Order Regular vigorously defend their being founded by St Francis of Assisi just as much as was the First Order and Second Order. The following segments, written by Fr Lino Temperini TOR, have been downloaded from the web site of the friars of the Third Order Regular:  
([www.franciscanfriarstor.com/resources/stf\\_st\\_francis\\_father\\_and\\_teacher.htm](http://www.franciscanfriarstor.com/resources/stf_st_francis_father_and_teacher.htm)).

#### **ST. FRANCIS: "FOUNDER" OF HIS PENITENTS**

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In the encyclical letter *Sacra propediem*, dated January 6, 1921, Benedict XV affirmed: from the testimony of the sources one can deduce from the evidence that, "St. Francis was the true founder of the Third Order in the same way that he was of the First and the Second, and thus, without doubt he was their wise legislator. The assertion from this pontifical document places us in step with a long line of such declarations from the historical writings that deal with the Third Order, it is also tied closely with the ancient and authentic writings of Franciscan history.

Nevertheless, some researchers have expressed some doubt as to the role of St. Francis in the foundation of the order of penitents, in some cases denying his paternity or reducing his role to one of marginal importance. Among the questions that have been put forward in this regard include: Can St. Francis be understood as the true and direct founder of his penitents, or did the movement spontaneously develop after (or as a result) of the itinerant apostolate of the first Franciscans? Did St. Francis simply give new energy and direction to an already ancient penitential movement in the Church?

According to some of these hypothetical questions it is posited that it might be more exact to refer to the movement as the "Third Franciscan Order" rather than the "Third Order of St. Francis"! Some have even written that the merit of *huius ordinis institutor* (founder of this order) should be attributed not to St. Francis but to Nicholas IV in 1289!

The verification of the title "founder" for St. Francis can be cleared up in the sources. The ancient texts, historical and juridical, consistently maintain that the *Franciscan Order of Penance*, or the Third Order, was intentionally founded by St. Francis. The distinction, made by some, between "institutor," "legislator," and "founder" is much too

sophisticated and alien to the mind of the biographers. These use the same terms when they speak about the rapport that St. Francis had with the brothers of the *First Order*, with the sisters of the *Second Order*, and with the brothers and sisters of the *Third Order*. The causal connection is identical in all three cases. According to the biographers and chroniclers, St. Francis was the true founder and master of a *triplice milizia* and thus has the same connection with each.

One look, even a hurried one, at the historical sources clearly sheds light for those who, "from the sources," arbitrarily deny to St. Francis the institution or foundation of this his "Masterpiece".

First of all, Francis himself wrote a fitting "forma di vita" for his penitents, sending them the *First* (1215) and *Second* (1221) *Letter to All the Faithful*. Also for this group, Card. Hugolino codified and compiled the ancient *Menoriale propositi* (1221).

Further, the following biographers and writers affirm with certainty the direct paternity of Francis: Thomas of Celano (*First Life of St. Francis*, 1228/29); Gregory IX (*Caput draconis*, 1228); Julian of Speyer (*Officium rhythmicum*, 1231/32); Pseudo-Abrincese (*Legenda versificata*, 1232/33); Julian of Speyer (*Vita*, 1232/35); St. Bonaventure (*Major Life of St. Francis*, 1260/63), and *Sermo II de S. Francisco* (1267); the *Anonymous of Perugia* (1266/70); the *Legenda monacensis* (1275); Bernard of Bressa (*Liber de laudibus*, 1276); the *Catalogus pontificum* (limited to the 13th century); the *Legend of the Three Companions* (1290/1380); the *Catalogus generalium* (from the early 14th century); Ubertino of Casale (*Arbor Vitae*, 1305); the *Legend of Perugia* (1311); and finally the *Fioretti* (1327/1380), in order to end with a work that is well known and popular. To these and other historical witnesses can also be added papal documents, as well as documents from local churches and civic institutions.

This most abundant, clear and consistent documentation does not permit us to doubt the direct paternity of St. Francis in regard to the "brothers and sisters of penance," or the *Third Order*.

...

[T]he Holy Spirit chose the Poverello as a focal point of gathering and as a reference for many who wished to respond in a similar way to the gospel message. The early companions, Clare and other women, and a crowd of laity all came to Francis and he received them as gifts from God. In this way *three Franciscan orders* were born, each destined to express [its] own unique gift of gospel spirituality and each graced by God with many vocations. As always, the driving force of these orders was the Lord (cf. 2 Cel 204), but Francis intentionally cooperated with the plan of God and became the father of many people, almost a new Abraham. The connection and rapport between Francis

and three institutions is identical, he is the founder, father, and teacher of the *First, Second, and Third* orders.

There is no justification to simply relegate to Francis, as some are wont to do, either the role of a re-animator of a pre-existent group, or as a champion of a[n] organization of laity involved in personal and ecclesiastical renewal, while at the same time denying him the title of the true founder *of his* penitents. To hold such an opinion would be like building a bridge in mid air. Those who do so depart from the foundation of historical truth and negate the paternity of Francis and his influence on the foundation of the *First and other* orders. Either they unfortunately ignore the strong witness of history, are not aware of it, choose to ignore it, or try to explain it away without allowing it to speak on its own. It serves us well to recall only some reliable historical sources to prove this point.

Thomas of Celano, an eyewitness of the first Franciscan experience, presents Francis as an "excellent craftsman" of the evangelical life who founded a "threefold army" each branch of which "he gave a norm of life, and he showed in truth the way of salvation in every walk of life (I Cel 37)." Gregory IX, already a friend and collaborator of St. Francis when he was simply Cardinal Hugolino, affirmed that the Poverello "sent into the battle three battalions of valiant soldiers (AF X 401).

Julian of Speyer, also a direct witness of the early Franciscan movement, wrote that Francis, "organized three orders: the first named the friars minor, the middle those who are poor women, and the third of penitents" (*Officium* AF X 383). He further asserts that St. Francis was the author of "three celebrated orders" and "the third, of no mean perfection, is called the *order of penitents*, made up of clerics and laity, single, celibate and married, heartily comprising all at the same time" (*Vita* in AF X 346, n. 23).

One finds similar affirmations in official documentation, such as the early text for the liturgy of the feast of the saint. Pseudo-Abrincense also clearly attributes "three orders" to St. Francis, and further gives the first place to the "order of penitents" (*Leg. vers.*, app. 11, lib. 7, vv. 60-66 in AF X 509). St. Bonaventure spoke about a great number of people "clerics and laity, virgins and married of both sexes" who were bound to the "new laws of penance according to the rule which they received from the man of God" and that Francis "decided to name this way of life the *Order of the Brothers of Penance*" (LM 4:6). The same affirmation is given in *Sermo II*, where the Seraphic Doctor writes that Francis, "instituted the Third Order, called the *Order of Penitents*" (*Opera* IX 576).

It is important to note the consistency of this documentation and the fact that none of the early sources den[ies] the influence Francis had on three orders. Nor should we overlook two passages in the Acts of the provincial chapter held in Bologna in November of 1289, only three months after the Rule of Nicholas IV. The Acts show that the brothers and sisters of penance had a clear idea of their Franciscan identity and their

connection with St. Francis. Two times the text[s] identify Francis as the "father of the penitents" ...(AFH 18, 1925: 348, 350).

The historical texts place the Third Order firmly in the Franciscan movement and affirm that the early members of the order recognized this fact. Those who approach the literature with an open mind must be convinced that the biographers, chroniclers, and bulls consistently affirm Francis' direct paternity of *three orders* in the same way and without discrimination.

### Vocabulary Building Exercise:

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Please re-read the articles above and, using a highlighter, select any words or phrases you do not know. Look them up using the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary. Add these words and their definitions to your Vocabulary List.

### FIRST PROFICIENCY

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Your first Proficiency Testing will consist of the following parts:

1. VOCABULARY
2. SHORT ANSWER
3. ESSAY

You'll be asked to define words or terms, provide a short paragraph answer to several questions and be given the choice of three of four essay questions, which will require a full page to answer. Your responses are to be sent to [aencass@gmail.com](mailto:aencass@gmail.com)

You may use all acceptable resources to assist in your answers. Any work not your own **MUST** be credited. You may **NOT** work together. Wikipedia and any Wiki are **NOT** ACCEPTABLE RESOURCES.

### FIRST PROFICIENCY

### COMPONENTS OF THE FRANCISCAN FAMILY

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1. **CLERICAL RELIGIOUS**
  - a. **FIRST ORDER - OFM**

"The rule and life of the Friars Minor is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity." (Honorius III)

Priests and deacons of the three branches of the First Order:

- **Order of Friars Minor Conventual - OFMConv:** 4,577 in 2003
- **Order of Friars Minor Capuchin - OFMCap:** 11,000 approx.
- **Order of Friars Minor - OFM :** 15,795 in 2005

#### **b. THIRD ORDER REGULAR FRIARS – TOR**

“This is the form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis: to observe the holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity.” (John Paul II)

Priests and deacons of the TOR: About 1,000 worldwide. (Not present in Oceania, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, East Malaysia).

#### **c. THIRD ORDER REGULAR MEN**

Some Congregations of Franciscan Brothers include priests. There are none in Oceania.

### **2. SECULAR CLERGY**

#### **a. SECULAR FRANCISCAN BISHOPS, PRIESTS AND DEACONS:**

Some popes: Leo XIII, John XXIII, Paul VI. Cardinals: Jaime Sin, Manila. Archbishops: Anthony Soter Fernandez, Kuala Lumpur.

Some bishops and about three hundred diocesan priests in the world who profess the Secular Franciscan Rule. Three priests in Australia.

### **3. LAY RELIGIOUS**

#### **a. FIRST ORDER FRIARS**

Friars of the three branches of the First Order who are not clerics. “Lay Brothers” is not current terminology. They profess the Rule of Honorius III.

#### **b. THIRD ORDER REGULAR FRIARS – TOR**

Friars of the TOR who are not clerics. They profess the Rule of John Paul II.

#### **c. SECOND ORDER**

“The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters, which the Blessed Francis founded, is this: to observe the holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without property and in chastity.” (Innocent IV)

- **Order of St Clare, Campbelltown and Aitape - OSC:** about 17,000 worldwide.
- **Order of St Clare, Bendigo - PCC (Colletines)**
- **Sisters of St Clare, Waverley - OSC:** about 25 in Australia.

#### **d. THIRD ORDER REGULAR WOMEN - FRANCISCAN SISTERS**

Many Congregations of Franciscan Sisters who profess the Rule of John Paul II. Each Institute has its own General Constitutions. About 200,000 worldwide.

- **Franciscan Missionaries of Mary – FMM**
- **Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood – FMDM**
- **Missionary Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception – MFIC**
- **Franciscan Sisters of the Heart of Jesus - FCJ (Maltese)**
- **Franciscan Sisters of St Anthony - FSSA (Italian)**
- **Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sabah –FSIC**
- **Sisters of St Francis of Sarawak – SSFS**

#### **e. THIRD ORDER REGULAR MEN**

Congregations of Franciscan Brothers, some including priests. They profess the Rule of John Paul II, but each Institute has its proper General Constitutions. Not present in Oceania.

### **4. SECULAR LAITY**

#### **a. SECULAR INSTITUTES**

“A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within” (Canon 710).

- **Missionaries of the Kingship of Christ:** men and women. Only women in Oceania.

#### **b. SECULAR FRANCISCAN ORDER**

“In the Church there are associations distinct from institutes of consecrated life and societies of apostolic life, in which the Christian faithful, either clergy or laity, or clergy

and laity together, strive by common effort to promote a more perfect life ... and to animate the temporal order with the Christian spirit” (Canon 298)

“Associations whose members live in the world but share in the spirit of some religious institute, under the overall direction of the same institute, and who lead an apostolic life and strive for Christian perfection, are known as third orders, or are called by some other suitable title”(Canon 303).

“By their profession [Secular Franciscans] pledge themselves to live the gospel in the manner of Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.” (Paul VI)

**National Fraternity of Oceania:** (Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, East Malaysia). Eight Regional Fraternities (Australia, 6; New Zealand, 1; Singapore-Sabah, 1).

#### **c. FRANCISCAN YOUTH:**

“The Franciscan Youth ... is formed by those young people who feel called by the Holy Spirit to share the experience of the Christian life in fraternity, in the light of the message of Saint Francis of Assisi, deepening their own vocation within the context of the Secular Franciscan Order.” (General Constitutions SFO, Art. 96.2)

“The Franciscan Youth, as a component of the Franciscan family, requests from the competent secular leaders and religious superiors, respectively, fraternal animation and spiritual assistance.” (General Constitutions SFO, Art. 96.6)

- **St Johns Park, NSW: FRAMA:** One group of Croatian background, in formation.

#### **d. FRANCISCAN CHILDREN:**

“The formation of groups of children should be encouraged. With the help of a pedagogy and an organization suitable to their age, these children should be initiated into a knowledge and love of the Franciscan life.” (General Constitutions SFO, Art. 25)

“Franciscan Children is the initiation into the Franciscan experience adapted to children and to pre-adolescents so that they may aim at the ideal of the perfect man realised in Jesus Christ, the Word made man, and lived by St Francis of Assisi.” (SFO National Council, Italy)

No groups in Oceania.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE EARLIER AND LATER RULE OF ST FRANCIS

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During the year 1220 and 1221, Francis set about drawing up a revision of the original Rule and bringing it into harmony with the needs of the day. When he had finished the revision, he gave it to Brother Caesar of Speyer to check it over and to embellish it with quotations from the Scripture. Brother Caesar did this and the result was what we call the Earlier Rule of 1221. It was not, however, presented to the Holy See for approbation because it was in essence the original Rule, approved orally in 1209. This Rule does have an importance and real value, although, of course, it has no legal standing today.

The Earlier Rule of 1221 did not meet the expectations of the friars, especially the ministers and the more learned brothers. For the most part, because it was not presented in sufficiently legal terminology, and because its regulations were not sufficiently precise. These brought Francis to rewrite the official Rule.

The *Speculum Perfectionis* records that Francis employed the services of his close friend Brother Leo as companion and secretary in the work and Brother Bonizo of Bologna, a canon lawyer, to assure the legal aspects of the work. Pope honourius III approved the Later Rule in the Bull *Solet annuere*, November 29, 1223.

## Comparison and Contrast of the Rules

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The Rule of 1223 is much shorter, with only twelve chapters, a far more concise document, much more relevant, much more a legal act. The passionate appeals, the admonitions, which break through the Earlier Rule, the biblical quotations, the prayers and the individuality, are gone. The changes are subtler, but important: procedure for the election of the minister general is laid down; and where, before, the brothers could observe the Rule literally, even against the minister general's interpretation, now his consent to their reading of it becomes necessary; the brothers are forbidden to enter 'the convents of nuns' was not a term ever used by Francis of his Poor Ladies. There is no word of 'guardians', but, under the provincial minister, there is a new officer, the custodian - a different sounding word. Before, there had been the words of the Gospel for the sending out of the disciples, the very crux of the whole Franciscan message. Now, there is only a pathetic appeal from their founder that >they should not quarrel, nor contend with words upon the way, nor judge one another, but they should be peaceful. And that they ought not to ride, unless by manifest necessity.' But the omissions Francis regretted above all others were those clauses that had dealt with the Blessed Sacrament. He would indeed have added new ones, wishing his friars to teach a special reverence for it, and to see that it was kept with all seemliness, carrying with them 'fair and clean pyxes,' and even 'wafer irons for making fair and clean hosts.' Now there was no mention of the sacrament: it was thought such propaganda might cause trouble with parochial priests: it was not considered very necessary or relevant.

We also know that Francis had additional help in constructing the Rule as evident from its style, for the style has an elegance and fluency that are not found in the other writings of Francis. (e.g. read the Latin passage in praise of poverty that occurs in Chapter 6 to appreciate the artistry of the style.)

The Earlier Rule is thoroughly biblical in its inspiration and composition with some twenty-four chapters <sup>See note 1</sup>. It confronts us with a high idealism <sup>See note 2</sup>, while expressing at the same times the difficulties of living amid the harsh realities of the world. The Later Rule, on the other hand, reveals a more legal mind eager to define the limits to which we might go. It does not sacrifice the gospel ideals, but to grasp it fully we must be able to break through the medieval idiom in which many of those ideals are encased.

In Rule 1223, we will see that the most important chapters are the first and the last chapters. The first chapter set forth in brief fashion what is explained in detail in the chapters that follows:

*Chapter 1. Later Rule*

*The Rule and Life of the Friars Minors is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by living in obedience, without property and in chastity.*

We immediately notice that all the scriptural quotations have been removed when compared with the Earlier Rule. The final chapter sums up the whole in one sentence: "And so, firmly established in the Catholic faith, we may live always according to the poverty and the humility and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have solemnly promised."

Looking at the second chapter of each document, we see the differences in the two documents, differences that suggest that the fraternity was becoming increasingly structured. In the Earlier Rule, Francis directs the brothers to receive with kindness someone who desired to "receive life" from them. The Later Rule omits the warmth of the Earlier Rule <sup>See note 3</sup>, and envisions a more conditioned acceptance in which the provincial minister must examine the candidate on his knowledge of the faith and the sacraments. The term, "provincial minister", appears in the Later Rule and not in the Earlier Rule, as the Order had been divided into provinces in 1217. Moreover, a canonical requirement is added, concerning those who are married, as well as a warning that neither the minister nor the brothers should become involved in the candidate's temporal affairs. We can easily see that experience had taught the brothers to be more circumspect in their reception of those who desired to join them.

<p><i>Chapter 2. Earlier Rule</i></p> <p><i>If anyone, wishing by divine inspiration to accept this life, comes to our brothers, let him be received by them with kindness. If he is determined to accept our life, let the brothers be very careful not to become involved in his temporal affairs, but let them present him to their minister as quickly as possible.</i></p> <p><i>On his part, let the minister receive him with kindness, encourage him and diligently explain the tenor of our life to him.</i></p> <p><i>After this has been done, let the above mentioned person - if he wishes and is capable of doing so spiritually without any difficulty - sell all his belongings and be diligent in giving everything to the poor (cf. Mt 19.21).</i></p> <p><i>Let the brothers and the minister of the brothers be careful not to interfere in any way in his temporal affairs; let them not accept money either by themselves or through an intermediary. Nevertheless, if they are in need, the brothers, like other poor people, can accept, instead of money, whatever is needed for the body.</i></p>	<p><i>Chapter 2. Later Rule</i></p> <p><i>If any would desire to adopt this life and would come to our brothers, let them send them to their Ministers provincial, to whom alone, and not to others, is the permission to receive friars conceded.</i></p> <p><i>Let the ministers indeed examine them diligently concerning the Catholic Faith and the sacraments of the Church. And if they believe these things and want to observe them faithfully and firmly unto the end, and they have no wives or, if they do, their wives have already entered a monastery, or having taken a vow of continence, permission [to enter one] has been granted to them by authority of the bishop of the diocese, and the wives are of such an age that suspicion cannot arise concerning them, let them say unto these the word of the Holy Gospel (cf. Mt 19:21), that they should go and sell all that is their own and strive to give it to the poor. But if they cannot do this, a good will suffices for them.</i></p> <p><i>And let the friars and their ministers beware, lest they be solicitous concerning their temporal things, so that they may freely do with their own things, whatever the Lord will have inspired them. If however counsel is required, let the ministers have permission to send them to other God fearing men, by whose counsel their goods may be spent on the poor.</i></p>
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There is also an almost defensive tone to the Earlier Rule's teaching about wearing poor clothes, a teaching reinforced by two quotations, Luke 7:25 and Matt 11:8. The Later Rule, however, suggest that the poor clothes or tunic had become not only acceptable but also a sign of respectability. It suggests that the brothers were no longer inviting ridicule and criticism; they were now in social positions from which they could ridicule or criticize others.

When we look at many of those clarifying passages of the Earlier Rule <sup>See note 4</sup>, we quickly sense that activities or ministries conditioned their expressions of poverty and

simplicity. The Later Rule, then, is quite straightforward in expressing the gospel way of life that Francis envisioned and does so with an economy of words.

<i>Chapter 2 Earlier Rule</i>	<i>Chapter 2 Later Rule</i>
<p data-bbox="235 407 852 632"><i>When he has returned, the minister may give him the clothes of probation for a year, that is, two tunics without a hood, a cord, trousers, and a small cape reaching to the cord. When the year and term of probation has ended, let him be received into obedience.</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 674 837 905"><i>After this it will be unlawful for him to join another Order or to wander outside obedience according to the decree of the Lord Pope and the Gospel, for no one putting his hand to the plough and looking to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God (Lk 9:62).</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 947 849 1094"><i>If anyone comes, however, who cannot give away his belongings without difficulty and has the spiritual will to do so, let him leave them behind, and it will suffice for him.</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 1136 826 1209"><i>Let no one be received contrary to the rite and practice of the Holy Church.</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 1251 854 1398"><i>Let all the other brothers who have already promised obedience have one tunic with a hood and, if it is necessary, another without a hood and a cord and trousers.</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 1440 831 1713"><i>Let all the brothers wear poor clothes and, with the blessing of God, they can patch them with sackcloth and other pieces, for the Lord says in the Gospel: Those who wear expensive clothing and live in luxury (Lk 7:25) and who dress in fine garments are in the houses of kings (Mt 11:8).</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 1755 846 1871"><i>Although they may be called hypocrites, let them nevertheless not cease from doing good and let them not seek expensive clothing in this</i></p>	<p data-bbox="868 407 1487 747"><i>Afterwards let them grant them the clothes of probation, that is, two tunics without a capuche, a cord, breeches, and a caparone [extending] to the cord, unless it seems to the same ministers [that it should be] otherwise according to God. Having truly finished the year of probation, let them be received to obedience, promising to observe always this life and Rule.</i></p> <p data-bbox="868 789 1479 1020"><i>And in no manner will it be licit for them to go forth from this religious institute, according to the command of the Lord Pope, because according to the Holy Gospel "No one putting hand to the plough and turning back is fit for the Kingdom of God." (Lk 9:62)</i></p> <p data-bbox="868 1062 1471 1209"><i>And let those who have already promised obedience have a tunic with a capuche, and if they wish to have it, another without a capuche.</i></p> <p data-bbox="868 1251 1463 1325"><i>And let those who are driven by necessity be able to wear footwear.</i></p> <p data-bbox="868 1367 1471 1482"><i>And let all the friars wear cheap clothing and be able to patch these with sackcloth and other pieces with the blessing of God.</i></p> <p data-bbox="868 1524 1479 1713"><i>I warn and exhort them, not to despise nor judge men, whom they see clothed with soft and coloured clothes, using dainty food and drink, but rather let each one judge and despise his very self.</i></p>

<i>world that they might have a garment in the kingdom of heaven (cf. Mt 22:11)</i>	
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*Chapter 3, Later Rule*

*Clerics are to perform the divine office according to the Ordo of the Roman Church, except for the psalter, for which they can have breviaries.*

*Let the laymen indeed say twenty-four "Our Fathers" for matins; for lauds five ; for prime, terce, sext and none, for each of these seven, for vespers, however, twelve; for compline seven; and let them pray for the dead.*

*And let them fast from the Feast of All saints until Christmas. Indeed may those who voluntarily fast the holy lent, which begins at Epiphany and for the forty days that follow, which the Lord consecrated with His own holy fast, be blessed by the Lord, and let those who do not wish [to do so] not be constrained. But let them fast the other [lent] until the [day of the] Resurrection of the Lord.*

*At other times however they are not bound to fast, except on Fridays. Indeed in time of manifest necessity the friars are not bound to the corporal fast.*

*Indeed, I counsel, warn and exhort my friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when they go about through the world, they are not to quarrel nor contend in words (cf 2 Tim 2:14), nor are they to judge others, but they are to be meek, peaceable and modest, meek and humble, speaking uprightly to all, as is fitting. And they should not ride horseback, unless they are driven [to do so] by manifest necessity or infirmity.*

*Into whatever house they may enter, first let them say: "Peace to this house." (cf Lk 10:5) And according to the Holy Gospel it is lawful to eat of any of the foods, which are placed before them. (cf Lk 10:8)*

Chapter 3 shows how the primitive fraternity had changed and needed more structure, and how the liturgical practices of the post-conciliar Church influenced the daily life of both the clerical and lay brothers. The prescriptions of Rule 1223 are very precise; clerics are to say the Divine Office; laics the Our Fathers. The Divine Office was to be said according to the order of the Holy Roman Church, that is, according to the use of the papal court, developed especially under the direction of Pope Innocent III.

We find a much simpler directive concerning the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours that reflects the changes that were taking place in the church after the Fourth Lateran Council. Yet what is more significant about this chapter is how clearly Francis calls us to live in the world <sup>See note 5</sup>, though this is implied in the Earlier Rule.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6, however, indicate some of the important shifts that took place in the pursuit of gospel fraternity, especially in the practice of poverty.

*Chapter 4 Later Rule*

*I firmly command all the friars, that in no manner are they to receive coins or money through themselves or through an interposed person. However for the necessities of the infirm and for the clothing of the other friars, only the ministers and the custodes are to conduct a solicitous care, by means of spiritual friends, according to places and seasons and cold regions, as they see expedites necessity; with this always preserved, that, as has been said, they do not receive coins nor money.*

*Chapter 5 Later Rule*

*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.*

*Chapter 6 Later Rule*

*Let the Friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor place, nor any thing. And as pilgrims and exiles (cf 1 Pt 2:11) in this age let them go about for alms confidently, as ones serving the Lord in poverty and humility, nor is it proper that they be ashamed [to do so], since the Lord made Himself poor in this world (cf 2 Cor 8:9) for us. This is that loftiness of most high poverty, which has established you, my most dear Friars, as heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, making you poor in things, it has raised you high in virtues (cf Jam 2:5). Let this be your "portion", which leads you "into the land of the living" (cf. Ps 141,6). Cleaving totally to this, most beloved Friars, may you want to have nothing other under heaven in perpetuity, for the sake of the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*And, wherever the friars are and find themselves, let them mutually show themselves to be among their family members. And let them without fear manifest to one another their own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son (cf 1 Th 2:7) according to the flesh, how much more diligently should he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?*

*And, if any of them should fall into infirmity, the other friars should care for him, as they would want to be cared for themselves.*

Francis now speaks to us in much stronger language, especially in the prohibition against money <sup>See note 6</sup>; here he makes no exceptions to that prohibition as we find in the Earlier Rule. (We do not find "I strictly command.")

In the Earlier Rule, Francis and his first followers begin with a consideration of work and continue with a prohibition against receiving money as payment. But the prohibition against receiving money takes first place in the Later Rule, while consideration follows after it. Moreover, the Earlier Rule spoke of those "who know how to work": advising them to do so "provided it is not contrary to the good of their souls and can be performed honestly." The Later Rule omits all such language and, instead, speaks of "grace of working," urging us to "work faithfully and devotedly" and places its advice in the context of asceticism and of prayer. Work, in other words, does not define our identity. It is grace, as is every aspect of our calling. What are most important are that it remains submissive or subservient to the primary dimension of our life, intensifying our loving relationship with God. From this perspective, we are in a better position to read the first half of chapter 6, in which we find a clear, rich statement of Francis's vision of poverty.

We may have observed this in chapter 9 of the Earlier Rule and see its implication in its following chapters, especially in the directives for the caring for the sick. But here we have a clear, articulate joining of two ideas, as if Francis wanted us to be sure of his vision that the foundation of a fraternal life is the pursuit of a most penetrating poverty *see note 7*.

<i>Chapter 9, Earlier Rule</i>	<i>Chapter 9, Later Rule</i>
<i>Let each one confidently make known his need to another that the other might discover what is needed and minister to him.</i>	<i>And, wherever the friars are and find themselves, let them mutually show themselves to be among their family members. And let them without fear manifest to one another their own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son (cf 1 Th 2:7) according to the flesh, how much more diligently should he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?</i>
<i>Let each one love and care for his brother as a mother loves and cares for her son in those matters in which God has given him the grace (cf. 1 Thess 2:7)</i>	

Not only is the later text more polished and grammatically correct. It is also more expressive of Francis's understanding that the glue of fraternal life is nothing other than the Spirit. From this vantage-point, we can easily understand chapter 7, which touches on those who are spiritually sick, that is, sinners. Chapter 8 describes building the fraternity through chapters and choosing those whom we would have as "ministers and servants". Chapter 9 extends the role of a chapter by entrusting some with the ministry of preaching. The first part of chapter 10 portrays the unique bond of a loving obedience

existing between one trusted with the responsibility of serving the other and the other charged with responding to his initiatives.

*Chapter 7 Later Rule*

*If any of the friars, at the instigation of the enemy, should sin mortally, for those sins, concerning which it has been ordained among the friars, that one have recourse to the Ministers provincial alone, the aforesaid friars are bound to have recourse to them as soon as they can, without delay. Indeed let the Ministers themselves, if they are priests, with mercy enjoin upon them a penance; if indeed they are not priests, let them have it enjoined by other priests of the order, as it will seem to them to better expedite [the matter] according to God. And they should beware, not to grow angry and be distressed on account of the sin of another, since anger and distress impede charity in themselves and in others.*

*Chapter 8 Later Rule*

*All the friars are bound to have always one of the friars of this very same religion as Minister general and servant of the whole fraternity and they are bound firmly to obey him. When he dies, let an election of a successor be made by the Ministers provincials and the custodes in the Pentecost Chapter, in which the ministers provincial are bound to convene at once wherever it will have been determined by the minister general; and this once every three years or at another interval greater or less, as it will have been ordained by the aforesaid minister.*

*And if at any time it may appear to all the Ministers provincial and to the custodes, that the aforesaid minister is not sufficient for the service and common utility of the friars, the aforesaid friars, to whom the electing has been given, are bound in the Name of the Lord to choose another as their guard. Indeed, after the Pentecost Chapter, let the ministers and custodes each be able, if they want and if it will seem to be expedient for them, once in the same year to call their friars together in chapter in their own custodies.*

*Chapter 9 Later Rule*

*Let the friars not preach in the diocese of any bishop, when he has spoken against their preaching. And let no friar at all dare preach to the people, unless he will have been examined by the minister general of this fraternity and approved, and there be conceded to him by the same the office of preaching.*

*I also warn and exhort these same friars, that in preaching, that they do, their expressions be considered and chaste (cf Ps 11:7; 17:21), for [sake of] the utility and edification of the people, by announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory with brevity of speech; since a brief word did the Lord speak upon the earth. (cf Rom 9:28)*

In the second half of chapter 10, we can perceive how the simplicity of the Later Rule belies such hidden layers of meaning and how easily we can pass over the full extent of Francis's thought.

<i>Chapter 10, Earlier Rule</i>	<i>Chapter 10, Later Rule</i>
<p data-bbox="235 485 855 789"><i>Because the spirit of the flesh very much wants and strives to have the words but cares little for the activity, it does not seek a religion and holiness in an interior spirit, but wants and desires to have a religion and a holiness outwardly apparent to people. They are the ones of whom the Lord says: Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward (Mt 6:2).</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 831 855 1098"><i>The Spirit of the Lord, however, wants the flesh to be mortified and looked down upon, considered of little worth and rejected. It strives for humility and patience, the pure, simple and true peace of the spirit. Above all, it desires the divine fear, the divine wisdom and the divine love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.</i></p>	<p data-bbox="868 485 1492 1062"><i>Indeed I warn and exhort the friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they beware of all pride, vain glory, envy, avarice (cf Lk 12:15), care and solicitude for this age, detraction and murmuring, and that those who are ignorant of letters not care to learn letters; but let them strive, so that above all things they should desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy operation, to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, [and] patience in persecution and in infirmity, and to love those who persecute and correct and accuse us, because the Lord says, (Mt. 5:44). (Mt. 5:10). "He who has persevered until the end, however, will be saved" (Mt. 10:22).</i></p>

In the Earlier Rule, Francis describes activities in pharisaic ways (seeking a religion and holiness outwardly apparent to people) and in those that are self-aggrandizing (seeking to be glib or articulate so as to please others). In his Later Rule, he expresses these characteristics in far more pointed but nonetheless self-centered ways: pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, and activities that are destructive of the fraternity. While the Earlier Rule envisions these characteristics as being mortified, looked down upon, and rejected, the Later Rule accentuates humility, patience, love and, in the very first place, unceasing prayer with a pure heart.

<p data-bbox="284 1507 568 1539"><i>Chapter 11 Later Rule</i></p> <p data-bbox="235 1581 1372 1770"><i>I firmly command all the brothers not to have suspicious company or conversation with women, and not to enter the monasteries of nuns, except those [friars] to whom special permission has been conceded by the Apostolic See; neither are they to be godfathers of men or women [so that] scandal may not arise on this account among the friars nor concerning them.</i></p>
<p data-bbox="284 1814 568 1845"><i>Chapter 12 Later Rule</i></p>

*Let whoever of the friars who by divine inspiration wants to go among the Saracens and other infidels seek permission for that reason from their minister provincial. Indeed the ministers are to grant permission to go to none, except those whom seems to be fit to be sent.*

*For which sake I enjoin the ministers by obedience, to seek from the Lord Pope one of the cardinals of the Roman Church, who is to be the governor, protector, and corrector of this fraternity, so that always subject and prostrate at the feet of this same Holy Church, stable in the Catholic Faith (cf Col 1:23) we may observe, what we have firmly promised: the poverty and humility and the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Although much of this final section of the Later Rule is taken up with a description of the cardinal called to be a liaison between the pope and Francis's followers, it confronts us with a call to live simply and poorly within the Church.

## Conclusion

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The original Rule of 1209, the Earlier Rule of 1221, and the Later Rule of 1223 were but stages in the development of the one Rule of the Friars Minor and for eight centuries the Later Rule has been the foundation of Franciscan life.

## Notes

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### 1. Contents of the Earlier Rule:

The first seventeen chapters are revised in the later rule, and reduced to a more logical pattern.

Chapters 18 to 21 resemble appendices to certain earlier chapters.

Chapter 18 completes Chapter 4.

Chapter 19 emphasizes orthodoxy in the faith.

Chapter 20 completes Chapter 3.

Chapter 21 completes Chapter 17.

Chapter 22 and 23 could exist as separate works. They contain a summary of the whole Franciscans ideal of life and an expression of the Spirit that should motivate the friars.

Chapter 24 (last paragraph of Chapter 23) is a final exhortation to be true to the Rule. It brings the text to a natural conclusion.

2. High idealism while expressing... E.g., Chapter 11 ER: - The brothers should not revile or detract but love one another. Chap 12 ER: - Impure glances and frequent association with women.

3. Sharp contrast with the Rule of Benedict, 58, which states "Do not grant newcomers to the monastic life an easy entry, but as the Apostle says, test the spirits to see if they are from God (1 Jn 4:1)."

4. Concern for the inevitable conflict between the ideals of Francis's vision and the reality that daily confronted those attempting to live them. Many clarifying passages of the Earlier Rule e.g., "If anyone comes, however, who cannot give away..." , in Chapter 2.
5. Challenge us to live the Gospel not simply in our homes, religious houses, etc, but wherever we may be. This may be written as a reaction to those friars who are satisfied with the rules of Benedict or Augustine, which envision a spiritual life lived in a monastery or specific community. Francis highlighted in a wonderfully simple way those values he would have us live intensely in the world, avoidance of arrogance and self-righteousness, the practice of meekness, modesty, humility and courtesy, living poorly in the midst of others, being messengers of peace and enjoyed the freedom of those who thoroughly cast their care upon the Lord. Those are the values of the Franciscans "civilization of love".
6. If money was looked upon as security rather than a medium of exchange, then Francis is calling us to live paradoxically in a state of economic insecurity, confident that our future rests in the hands of God. It is a challenge, touching on the strength of our faith. Are we willing to cast our care on the Lord, to turn to the table of the Lord, assured that God will take care of us?
7. Francis clearly links the practice of poverty and the pursuit of brotherhood. It is the Holy Spirit bringing us together as a fraternity. Three reasons for Francis's vision of poverty:
  - a. Through it, we can identify with Christ, who made himself poor in the world.
  - b. It can help us to reflect our inheritance and our actual sharing in the kingdom of heaven.
  - c. Finally, it is an ascetical means of giving ourselves more completely to Christ.

#### References:

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- 1 T.S.R. Boase, *St Francis of Assisi*. Thames and Hudson.
- 2 *The Writings of St Francis of Assisi*, Benen Fahy OFM and Placid Hermann OFM.
- 3 *St Francis of Assisi, Writing for a Gospel Life*. Regis Armstrong OFM Cap.
- 4 *The Marrow of the Gospel*, Ignatius Brady. Ed.

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## THE CONFIRMED RULE OF ST FRANCIS AND ST CLARE'S RULE

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### A Comparison

*By: Joshua Chen*

Francis had written two Rules. One in 1221, called the Earlier Rule, was without a papal seal. The other one was approved by the Pope in 1223, which was called the Later Rule. The Earlier Rule did not meet the expectation of the friars especially the ministers and the more learned brothers. Most of it was not presented in sufficiently legal terminology and its regulations were not sufficiently precise. The friars asked Francis to rewrite the Rule.

Francis brought two companions with him and started to rewrite the Rule. After he finished he presented it to the chapter on June 11, 1223, and the chapter made minor change in it. Pope honourius approved the Rule on November 29, 1223.

The Later Rule is not the work of Francis alone. The language is refined. The juridical portions are clear and correspond with the current canon law. From other materials we know that Cardinal Hugolino also helped him with the Rule. However Francis used the first person singular so that it was he who dictated the Rule.

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Innocent IV approved St Clare's Rule on August 9, 1253. The original Rule is in Latin.

In 1212, Francis received Clare and she lived under his direction and personal inspiration for a few years. Francis gave the Poor Sisters a short formula as a way of life. Starting from 1247, Clare wrote her own Rule.

Clare is the first woman to write a Rule for religious. She did not call the document a Rule but a Form of Life.

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There are twelve chapters in the Rule. A curial official may have imposed the number to signify its apostolic foundations.

The Rule is a collection of admonitions and precepts that is necessary for the brothers' life. It is a spiritual document that attempts to safeguard the brother's life. Francis spoke to his brothers in a personal way by using "most beloved", and "most dear". He writes not a jurist but as spiritual father who wants to infuse a certain spirit into their life.

But the Rule is also a juridical document that contains juridical prescriptions.

Chapter 1 is a synthesis of Franciscan life. Chapters 2 to 11 are a series of prescriptions and admonitions regarding the organization of the brotherhood. Those who come should give up possessions, and go about the world. The brothers are to live in the spirit of the gospel and reject the security represented by money, with disinterested love, and in Christian brotherhood to overcome the spirit of the flesh.

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Chapter 12 is a summary of the brothers' life.

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From 1247, Clare started to write her own Rule modeled on the friars' Later Rule. Much of the text was taken over bodily. The written and oral instructions of Francis provided the essentials, namely, the gospel foundation, that candidates give their goods to the poor, the manner of working, the life of mendicancy, absolute poverty, love and compassion for the erring, and spiritual direction from the Friars Minor. The division of Clare's Rule into twelve chapters occurred much later and probably in order to make it more like the Rule of the friars.

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Both Francis and Clare promised obedience to the Pope and the Church.

At the beginning of Later Rule, Francis said "The Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity."

Clare's Rule starts with "The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters is this: to observe the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity." But Clare added to obey Francis and his successors as well: "together with her sisters, she promises obedience to the blessed Francis"

Francis in his first sentence "the Rule and Life of the Lesser Brothers ..." indicated that, in Christ and for Christ, in an inseparable and humble union of brotherly love, the brothers desire to be united and conformed to Christ the head.

Clare used "sister" instead of "nun" to express her idea of minority and fraternity.

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In this chapter two saints gave a provision of how to receive new members.

The friars kept an itinerant life style. They received candidates individually at first and then through the provincials.

Clare prudently requires consultation of all the Sisters of the community and the permission of the Cardinal Protector. It expresses great confidence in the Sisters' ability to share the responsibility for major decisions. The Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the Sisters, and if the majority shall have agreed she can receive the candidates.

Clare directs the Novice Mistress to form the novices in a holy way of life, in fidelity to the monastic life, cultivating stability. "She (the mistress) shall form them diligently in a holy manner of living and proper behaviour according to the form of our profession."

They both asked that the provincial or abbess carefully examine the candidates concerning the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church if they want to join. "if they believe all these things and are willing to profess them faithfully and to observe them steadfastly to the end."

Francis and Clare simply asked that the tenor of their life be taught, which indicates that they were

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aware that each new brother or sister was a gift of God.

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Francis allowed the candidate to have two tunics “they may be given the clothes of probation, namely, two tunics without a hood, a cord, short trousers, and a little cape reaching to the cord”. However Francis admonished and exhorted the brothers not to look down upon or judge those who dressed in soft and fine clothes.

Clare allowed candidates to have three tunics and a mantle but not the veil during the period of probation. In addition, she admonished her sisters always to wear the poorest of garments: “to be allowed three tunics and a mantle. During the period of probation no one is to receive the veil. I admonish, entreat, and exhort my sisters that they always wear the poorest of garments.”

They both accepted married people who wanted to join their life if there was no obstacle.

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In chapter three Francis asked the clerical brothers to recite the Divine Office according to the rite of the holy Roman Church. The lay brothers might say Our Fathers.

He commanded the cult of divine service by works of penance with a close connection to divine worship, namely by devout and reasonable fasting, especially in those times when solemn celebrations were held in memory of the incarnation, birth, lent, passion and resurrection of Christ. He asked the brothers to pray for the dead.

The friars were to be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and humble, speaking courteously to everyone when preaching Gospel.

Clare specified the recitation of the Divine Office according to the custom of the Friars Minor. Those who did not know how to read should say Our Fathers. She asked them to “read it without singing”. She also gave a provision of “confession at least twelve times a year”. She added, “The sisters are to fast at all times”.

Both Francis and Clare implemented the program of the Fourth Lateran Council for the renewal of liturgical life. The aim was to overcome the negative effects of a deficient theology that was keeping the faithful from reception of the Eucharist due to an exaggerated sense of sin. “They should receive Communion seven times.”

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In this chapter, Chapter Four, and the following two chapters, Five and Six, Francis laid down the way and form of a heavenly life, conformed to the cross. He strictly commanded all the brothers not to receive money. “I strictly command all my brothers not to receive coins or money in any form, either personally or through intermediaries.” He strongly commanded his brothers to reject the security represented by money.

This chapter and the following two are also the heart of the Form of Life of the Poor Sisters, not having possessions, and living in poverty to follow Jesus Christ. This provided the principal font for this new form of life in the Church.

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“We might never turn aside from the most holy poverty we had embraced”. The Abbess is “not to receive or hold onto any possessions or property through an intermediary, or even anything that might reasonably be called property, except as much land as necessity requires for the integrity and the proper seclusion of the monastery; and this land is not to be cultivated except as a garden for the needs of the sisters.”

Clare secured her Form of Life by reproducing literally the Last Will of Francis for the Poor Ladies. “to live always in this most holy life and in poverty. And keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone.”

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Francis asked that “those brothers to whom the Lord has given the grace of working, may work faithfully and devotedly.”

But he commanded them not to receive money and clearly prevented them from obtaining whatever exceeded the measure of necessity: “they may receive whatever is necessary for the bodily support of themselves and their brothers, excepting coin or money,”

Like Francis, Clare described work as a normal means of subsistence and a concrete way of practicing poverty and inculcating a spirit of minority. She used the same words about work: “The sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working are to work faithfully and devotedly”.

She indicated the chapter as the place for assignments and distribution of goods, to prevent favoritism: “the Abbess or her vicaress is bound to assign at the Chapter, in the presence of all, the manual work each is to perform.”

Finally, she asked the sisters to pray for the donors.

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Francis was concerned about the evangelical life so that he asked the brothers to have nothing of their own, neither personally nor in common. He wrote: “As pilgrims and strangers in this world, serving the Lord in poverty and humility, let them go seeking alms with confidence”. He wanted the brothers to possess nothing in accord with the example of Christ and to be freed through complete dispossession. He also asked them to care for the sick brothers as a mother cares for her son: “if any brother falls sick, the other brothers must serve him as they would wish to be served themselves”.

Clare used exactly same words as Francis did: “The sisters shall not acquire anything as their own, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all; instead, as pilgrims and strangers in this world who serve the Lord in poverty and humility, let them send confidently for alms”.

The medieval pilgrimage was a major expression of a life a penance. Thus Clare asked her sisters to renounce financial security as pilgrims and strangers in this world. Clare added the image of Mary whose lowliness was exalted: “do not wish to have anything else forever under heaven for the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ and His most holy Mother.” She wanted her sisters to accept the poor life for the sake of the Poor Christ and His Mother rather than for ascetical motives.

She did not allow the sister to receive or give anything without permission.

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Clare assimilated the instructions of Francis's care of the sick.

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Due to our weakness and great necessity, this chapter on sacramental penance is as the medicine and discipline of those who sin mortally. The brothers who sin are ordered to have recourse only to the ministers. Francis also gave the minister the manner and form for absolving sins. This should be done discreetly, usefully, mercifully and with tranquility. "They (the ministers) must be careful not to be angry or disturbed at the sin of another, for anger and disturbance impede charity in them and in others."

Clare followed Francis's consideration of physical illness with one on spiritual maladies. The basis is the Gospel mandate of fraternal correction.

She had the sisters who sinned mortally against the form of their life many times "to eat bread and water on the floor before all the sisters in the refectory for as many days as she shall have been obstinate." It seems excessive but it was moderate in contrast to the current monastic practices at that time which called for scourging or imprisonment.

Clare did not allow the sisters to be godmothers lest gossip or trouble arise because of this. Francis did not allow the brothers to be godfathers, in Chapter 11. Clare asked that a penance be mercifully imposed on the sister who sinned. "They must be careful not to be angry or disturbed at the sin of another, for anger and disturbance impede charity in them and in others." This is the same as in the Rule of Francis.

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Here is useful information about the election of the general minister, the government in general and a suitable way of electing the general minister.

The General Minister must conform himself to Christ the Good Shepherd in everything and for all things. The brothers are strictly bound to obey the ministers.

If the minister is not qualified for the service and general welfare of the brothers, the brothers should elect another one.

In Chapter Four Clare combined legal precision with insistence on a spirit of mutual responsibility of all the members.

Clare indicated a pastoral, not a juridical, role for the Minister during the chapter of elections. When an abbess "is not competent for their service and common welfare, the sisters are bound to elect another as Abbess".

She gave a prescription for a model abbess "She should console those who are afflicted, and be, likewise, the last refuge for those who are disturbed; for, if they fail to find in her the means of health, the sickness of despair might overcome the weak."

In this chapter she said "At least once a week the Abbess is required to call her sisters together in the Chapter. There both she and her sisters must confess their common and public offences and negligence's humbly." This form of chapter does not appear in Francis's Rule.

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Francis showed that the authority of the Church is to be held in highest veneration and reverence. "The brothers may not preach in the diocese of any bishop, when he has opposed their doing so."

"When they preach, their language is to be well-considered and chaste, for the benefit and edification of the people, announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory, with brevity, because our Lord when on earth kept his word brief." In these words we can see the works of faith, truth, hope, grace and the good will of charity, all causes of damnation and salvation, of punishments and reward.

Clare wrote: "The sisters are to keep silence" Nevertheless they may communicate whatever is necessary always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice.

There are provisions for the grille and the parlor.

"The sisters may not speak in the parlor or at the grille without the permission of the Abbess or her Vicaress." Clare maintained the prescriptions of canonical discipline found in the Form of Life of Hugolino, and went beyond them.

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The visitation, correction and government of the brothers.

"Let the ministers admonish their brothers, and humbly and charitably correct the brothers, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and our Rule. Let the brothers, who are subject, remember that, for God's sake, they have renounced their own wills."

Francis admonished the brothers to desire the Spirit of the Lord: "let them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us".

Clare followed the general structure of Francis' Later Rule. She changed it slightly to fit a stable and monastic community. She did not change the core concept of living in obedience and of authority exercised as a service. "The Abbess should admonish and visit her sisters, and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything which would be against their soul and the form of our profession. The sisters, however, who are subjects, should remember that for God's sake they have renounced their own wills."

They both said "I admonish and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that the sisters be on their guard against all pride, vainglory, envy, greed, worldly care and anxiety, detraction and murmuring, (dissension and division). Let those who do not know how to read should not be eager to learn." Clare added "dissension and division" after "detraction and murmuring," Thus she re-emphasized a fundamental value of the Rule and life of the Poor Sisters: "the unity of mutual love."

Clare followed the structural form of Francis's text:

"Let them pay attention to what they must desire above all else: to have the Spirit of the Lord and its holy activity, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, to have humility and patience in persecution and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, rebuke and find fault with us, because the Lord says: Love

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your enemies and pray for those who persecute and calumniate you. 11Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 12But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved.”

"Let them devote themselves to what they must desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and weakness, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us; for the Lord says: Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice's sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt 5:10). But he who shall have persevered to the end will be saved.”

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Francis forbade his brothers to enter monasteries especially those of the Poor Ladies, lest under the pretext of divine love, a secret carnal love would come from a subtle working of demons. “I strictly command all the brothers not have any suspicious dealings or conversations with women, and they may not enter the monasteries of nuns.”

He also forbade them to be godfathers in relation to baptism and confirmation: “they may not be godfathers to men or women”. Clare forbade it at Chapter Seven.

She made strict legislation for the enclosure. “The sisters shall not allow anyone to enter the monastery before sunrise or to remain within after sunset, unless an evident, reasonable, and unavoidable cause demands.” But she also allowed some exceptions, which made for gospel flexibility. “The portress is to be mature in her manners and prudent.” “During the day the door should be firmly locked with one key.” “All the sisters should be extremely careful not to be seen by those who enter.”

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The brothers who wish by divine inspiration to go among the Saracens or other non-believers ask permission to go from their provincial ministers.

The provincial should ask from the Lord Pope for one of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, who would be the governor, protector and corrector of our fraternity, so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the Church and steadfast in the Catholic Faith.... Francis forbids anyone to tamper with this decree, or rashly dare to oppose it.

“So that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised.”

Clare used the same words.

“So that, always submissive and subject at the feet of that holy Church, and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may observe forever the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and the holy Gospel which we have firmly promised.”

The Visitor is to come from the Order of Friars Minor.

Clare also asked for a cardinal to be Protector of the Poor Sisters.

*By: Colin Teo*

<b>Details</b>	<b>The Confirmed Rule of St Francis (Later Rule)</b>	<b>The Form of Life (Rule) of St Clare of Assisi</b>
<b>Date</b>	November 29, 1223	August 9, 1253
<b>Pope</b>	Early beginnings with a statement presented to Innocent III in 1209/10 that later resulted after years of development in the Earlier Rule. Final redaction resulted in the Later Rule, with the Bull of Honorius III.	Previously had a rule by Cardinal Hugolino and Innocent IV based on Benedictine and other canonical legislation of 12 <sup>th</sup> and early 13 <sup>th</sup> centuries. Later Pope Innocent IV on the document Soletannuere confirms the rule base on her vision.
<b>Intro. to the rule</b>	Short introduction by Pope Honorius with message of approval	<p>Almost similar introduction with approval but includes the background of the rule that credits Francis as source of the rule.</p> <p>An overall content has added warmth with encouragement from the Pope.</p>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	The rule begins by stating the purpose and conditions of the Franciscan life (Lesser Brothers).	<p>Similarly to the LR with a clear assertion stating Francis as one that establishes their form of life.</p> <p>The Poor Sisters are to promise obedience to Francis and Clare and their successors.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 2</b></p>	<p>On new admittance of new brothers, the provincial minister is the only one that will grant that permission.</p>	<p>In contrast to the LR, the Abbess is bound to seek the consent of all sisters and if the majority has agreed, she may received her after having obtained the permission of the Lord Cardinal Protector.</p> <p>Furthermore, there must be no impediment to the observance of the life of a Poor Clare, e.g. advanced age or ill health or mental weakness.</p> <p>This chapter went on to the details of external procedure to be taken for a new sister from the cutting of hair to their manner of clothing. One interesting difference to the LR is the permission to have THREE tunics compared to two in the LR.</p> <p>As they are cloistered, only for a useful reasonable purpose are the Clares allowed to go outside the monastery.</p> <p>Young girls may join the order but will not make their profession until they reach the age required by law.</p> <p>Sisters serving outside the monastery are allowed to wear shoes.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 3</b></p>	<p>On the Divine Office, fasting and how the brothers should go about in the world.</p> <p>Clerical brothers recite the Divine Office according to the rite of the Roman Church. The lay brothers will recite the Our Fathers. All should pray for the dead.</p> <p>Fasting begins from the feast of All Saints until the Lord's Nativity.</p> <p>This section goes on to talk about how the Friars should conduct themselves when they go about the world.</p>	<p>The divine office and fasting, Confession and communion.</p> <p>Sisters who can read, celebrate the Divine Office according to the customs of the Friars Minor. Those who cannot read will recite the Our Fathers.</p> <p>On Prayer for the dead, in addition to the Our Fathers, is the Requiem aeternam at Vespers; twelve for matins. Those who can read should recite the Office of the Dead.</p> <p>When a sister of the dies, however, they shall say fifty Our Fathers.</p> <p>The sisters shall fast at all times. They may eat twice on Christmas, however, no matter on what day it happens to fall.</p> <p>This section, with no connection to LR, talks about the proper reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and communion.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 10</b></p>	<p>Ministers are to visit and admonish their brothers and humbly and charitably correct them.</p> <p>Francis further advises those who cannot observe the rule to have recourse to the ministers.</p> <p>He further admonishes the brothers to beware of pride, vainglory, envy, and greed, of care and solicitude for the things of this world.</p> <p>He encourages the brothers to have a spirit of prayer and to love one's enemies.</p>	<p>Likewise and in the same spirit to the LR, the Abbess has the same responsibility as the minister who should visit her sisters.</p> <p>The part on the Friar visitator is strangely found in Ch 12 :</p> <p>On the Visitator, the Chaplain and Cardinal Protector.</p> <p>The sisters since they are cloistered do not have a missionary tract .</p> <p>At the beginning of the chapter, the request of a Friar Visitator is spelt out clearly. His role is to correct excess against the form of their profession and other matters pertaining to the visitation.</p> <p>In addition, Clare requests a Friar Minor Chaplain, accompanied with a companion, to administer the sacraments to the sisters.</p> <p>The sisters also have a Cardinal as protector and corrector of the fraternity.</p>
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The similarities in the contents of the chapters of the LR are either found in another chapter of Clare's rule or not found at all and vice versa.

<p><b>Chapter 4</b></p>	<p>The brothers are not to received money</p>	<p>No similar references in Clare's rule.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 5</b></p>	<p>The manner of working.</p> <p>Work should be done to avoid idleness keeping in mind the spirit of prayer.</p> <p>In payment for their work, the friars can received what is necessary for the bodily support of themselves and their brothers, but not money.</p>	<p>Found in Chapter 7.</p> <p>Although similar to the ideals of Chapter 5, Work begins only after the Hour of Terce.</p> <p>The Abbess or her Vicarress is bound to assign the work that each should perform with her hands.</p> <p>They are also responsible for distributing alms "In common" received by benefactors for their needs with the advice of the discreets.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 6</b></p>	<p>On not acquiring anything as their own; begging alms; the sick brothers.</p> <p>Friars are not allowed property and should go about begging. The needs of each brother should be made known to one another in the spirit of "mother and child" especially when one is sick.</p>	<p>Found in Chapter 8</p> <p>This chapter shares the same spirit of LR's chapter 6. Except that as they are cloistered, the term "Sending for alms" as compared to the itinerant Friars "begging" for alms" seems ambiguous.</p> <p>Clare further elaborates much more the permission by the Abbess on the "sending and receiving of letters" by the sisters. The same applies to receiving goods or money (with advice of discreets) in the spirit of sharing.</p> <p>Sick sisters are allowed to sleep on a more comfortable "bed" made with straw and they may use feather pillows for their head. This even extends to woollen stockings and quilts if needed.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 7</b></p>	<p>On penances imposed on brothers who sin.</p> <p>When one has sinned mortally in regard to those sins that have been decreed, he must have recourse only to the provincial as quickly as possible. If the minister is a priest, he must impose a penance, if he is not, another priest will impose it</p>	<p>Found on Chapter 9</p> <p>As usual the Poor sisters share a similar idea but elaboration on the method of punishment is clearly spelt out. The Abbess and the sister will first admonish the penitent two or three times. If she does not amend she has to eat bread and water on the floor before all the sisters in the refectory for as many days as she shall have been obstinate.</p> <p>An addition to this chapter is reconciliation between sisters. The person who causes the trouble will have to prostrate before the offended and ask for her intercession to the Lord for forgiveness.</p> <p>The Abbess (with advice of discreet) subjects the sisters serving outside the monastery to the penances. Proper conduct is required especially being wary of "suspicious meetings". No gossiping of events that can cause scandal outside the monastery.</p>
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<p><b>Chapter 8</b></p>	<p>The election of the Minister General and the chapter of Pentecost.</p> <p>Provincial ministers and custodians in the Chapter of Pentecost once every three years elect a minister.</p>	<p>Found on Chapter 4</p> <p>The sisters elect the Abbess (Professed sister only). This is done with the pastoral presence of the Minister General or the Minister Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor.</p> <p>Clare further elaborates the role of the Abbess to treat every sister equally (no favourites) to console those who are afflicted and to be the last refuge of someone who is troubled.</p> <p>She is bound to call a weekly chapter for public confession of faults and negligence and also to discuss concerns that affect the monastery.</p> <p>Unless there is a need, no heavy debt should be incurred. No safekeeping of deposited things, to avoid scandals and troubles.</p> <p>Lastly, eight elected sisters are to assist the Abbess in important matters.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 9</b></p>	<p>On Preachers</p>	<p>As the Poor Sisters are cloistered there is no reference to preaching.</p>
<p><b>Chapter 11</b></p>	<p>Brothers may not enter the monasteries of nuns or have suspicious dealings or conversations with women.</p>	<p>Although there is no special chapter for the sisters regarding visiting the brothers, sisters serving outside the monastery in chapter 9 do receive similar advice.</p>

<p><b>Chapter 12</b></p>	<p>Ends with mission to the Saracens and a request to the minister to petition a Cardinal as protector and corrector of the fraternity.</p>	<p>No similar reference.</p>
	<p>No reference in the LR</p>	<p>Chapter 5 talks about silence, the parlor and the Grille</p>

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## RULE OF FRANCISCAN ORDER OF FRIARS MINOR

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***as approved by the papal bull "Solet Annuere" of Honorius III of the 29th November 1223***

Honorius, Bishop, Servant of the servants of God, to our beloved sons, Friar Francis and the other friars of the Order of the Friars Minor, greetings and apostolic Benediction.

The Apostolic See is accustomed to grant the pious wishes and the upright desires of those petitioning to share in her benevolent favor. Wherefore, beloved sons in the Lord, having yielded to your pious entreaties, We confirm by Our apostolic authority the Rule of your Order, approved by Our predecessor, Pope Innocent, of good memory, quoted herein, and We thoroughly fortify with the patronage of this present writing that, which is as follows:

### **Chapter I**

**In the name of the Lord begins the life of the Friars Minor.**

The Rule and life of the Friars Minor is this, namely, to observe the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity. Friar Francis promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Honorius and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church; and the other friars are bound to obey Friar Francis and his successors.

### **Chapter II**

**Concerning those who wish to adopt this life, and how they should be received**

If any would desire to adopt this life and would come to our brothers, let them send them to their Ministers provincial, to whom alone, and not to others, is the permission to receive friars conceded. Let the ministers indeed examine them diligently concerning the Catholic Faith and the sacraments of the Church.

And if they believe these things and want to observe them faithfully and firmly unto the

end, and they have no wives or, if they do, their wives have already entered a monastery, or having taken a vow of continence, permission [to enter one] has been granted to them by authority of the bishop of the diocese, and the wives are of such an age that suspicion cannot arise concerning them, let them say unto these the word of the Holy Gospel (cf Mt 19:21), that they should go and sell all that is their own and strive to give it to the poor. But if they cannot do this, a good will suffices for them.

And let the friars and their ministers beware, lest they be solicitous concerning their temporal things, so that they may freely do with their own things, whatever the Lord will have inspired them. If however counsel is required, let the ministers have permission to send them to other God fearing men, by whose counsel their goods may be spent [erogentur] on the poor. Afterwards let them grant them the clothes of probation, that is, two tunics without a capuche, a cord [cingulum] , breeches, and a caparone [extending] to the cord, unless it seems to the same ministers [that it should be] otherwise according to God. Having truly finished the year of probation, let them be received to obedience, promising to observe always this life and Rule.

And in no manner will it be licit for them to go forth from this religious institute [de ista religione exire], according to the command of the Lord Pope, because according to the Holy Gospel **"No one putting hand to the plow and turning back is fit for the Kingdom of God."** (Lk 9:62)

And let those who have already promised obedience have a tunic with a capuche, and if they wish to have it, another without a capuche. And let those who are driven by necessity be able to wear footwear. And let all the friars wear cheap clothing and be able to patch these with sack-cloth and other pieces with the blessing of God. I warn and exhort them, not to despise nor judge men, whom they see clothed with soft and colored clothes, using dainty food and drink, but rather let each one judge and despise his very self.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Concerning the divine office and fasting; and in what manner the brothers ought to go through the world.**

Clerics are to perform the divine office according to the Ordo of the Roman Church, except for the Psalter, for which they can have breviaries.

Let the laymen indeed say twenty-four **"Our Fathers"** for matins; for lauds five ; for prime, terce, sext and none, for each of these seven, for vespers, however, twelve; for compline seven; and let them pray for the dead.

And let them fast from the Feast of All saints until Christmas. Indeed may those who voluntarily fast the holy lent, which begins at Epiphany and for the forty days that follow, which the Lord consecrated with His own holy fast, be blessed by the Lord, and let those who do not wish [to do so] not be constrained. But let them fast the other [lent] until the [day of the] Resurrection of the Lord.

At other times however they are not bound to fast, except on Fridays. Indeed in time of manifest necessity the friars are not bound to the corporal fast.

Indeed, I counsel, warn and exhort my friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when they go

about through the world, they are not to quarrel nor contend in words (cf 2 Tim 2:14), nor are they to judge others, but they are to be meek, peaceable and modest, meek and humble, speaking uprightly to all, as is fitting. And they should not ride horseback, unless they are driven [to do so] by manifest necessity or infirmity.

Into whatever house they may enter, first let them say: "**Peace to this house.**" (cf Lk 10:5) And according to the Holy Gospel it is lawful to eat of any of the foods, which are placed before them. (cf Lk 10:8)

#### **Chapter IV**

##### **That the brothers should not receive money**

I firmly command all the friars, that in no manner are they to receive coins or money through themselves or through an interposed person. However for the necessities of the infirm and for the clothing of the other friars, only the ministers and the custodes are to conduct a solicitous care, by means of spiritual friends, according to places and seasons and cold regions, as they see expedites necessity; with this always preserved, that, as has been said, they do not receive coins nor money.

#### **Chapter V**

##### **On the manner of working**

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 [deservire]. Indeed concerning the wages of labor, 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.

#### **Chapter VI**

##### **That the Friars are to appropriate nothing for themselves, and concerning the begging of alms and sick friars.**

Let the Friars appropriate nothing for themselves, neither house nor place, nor any thing. And as pilgrims and exiles (cf 1 Pt 2:11) in this age let them go about for alms confidently, as ones serving the Lord in poverty and humility, nor is it proper that they be ashamed [to do so], since the Lord made Himself poor in this world (cf 2 Cor 8:9) for us. This is that loftiness of most high poverty, which has established you, my most dear Friars, as heirs and kings of the Kingdom of Heaven, making you poor in things, it has raised you high in virtues (cf Jm 2:5). Let this be your "*portion*", which leads you "**into the land of the living**" (cfr Ps 141,6). Cleaving totally to this, most beloved Friars, may you want to have nothing other under heaven in perpetuity, for the sake of the Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

And, wherever the friars are and find themselves, let them mutually show themselves to

be among their family members. And let them without fear manifest to one another their own need, since, if a mother nourishes and loves her own son (cf 1 Th 2:7) according to the flesh, how much more diligently should he love and nourish his own spiritual brother?

And, if any of them should fall into infirmity, the other friars should care for him, as they would want to be cared for themselves.

### **Chapter VII**

#### **On the penance to be imposed on Friars who are sinning.**

If any of the friars, at the instigation of the enemy, should sin mortally, for those sins, concerning which it has been ordained among the friars, that one have recourse to the Ministers provincial alone, the aforesaid friars are bound to have recourse to them as soon as they can, without delay. Indeed let the Ministers themselves, if they are priests, with mercy enjoin upon them a penance; if indeed they are not priests, let them have it enjoined by other priests of the order, as it will seem to them to better expedite [the matter] according to God. And they should beware, not to grow angry and be distressed on account of the sin of another, since anger and distress impede charity in themselves and in others.

### **Chapter VIII**

#### **On the election of the Minister general of this fraternity; and on the Chapter at Pentecost.**

All the friars are bound to have always one of the friars of this very same religion as Minister general and servant of the whole fraternity and they are bound firmly to obey him. When he dies, let an election of a successor be made by the Ministers provincials and the custodes in the Pentecost Chapter, in which the ministers provincial are bound to convene at once wherever it will have been determined by the minister general; and this once every three years or at another interval greater or less, as it will have been ordained by the aforesaid minister.

And if at any time it may appear to all the Ministers provincial and to the custodes, that the aforesaid minister is not sufficient for the service and common utility of the friars, the aforesaid friars, to whom the electing has been given, are bound in the Name of the Lord to choose another as their guard [in custodem]. Indeed, after the Pentecost Chapter, let the ministers and custodes each be able, if they want and if it will seem to be expedient for them, once in the same year to call their friars together in chapter in their own custodies.

### **Chapter IX**

#### **On preachers.**

Let the friars not preach in the diocese of any bishop, when he has spoken against their preaching. And let no friar at all dare preach to the people, unless he will have been

examined by the minister general of this fraternity and approved, and there be conceded to him by the same the office of preaching.

I also warn and exhort these same friars, that in preaching, that they do, their *expressions be considered and chaste* (cf Ps 11:7; 17:21), for [sake of] the utility and edification of the people, by announcing to them vices and virtues, punishment and glory with brevity of speech; *since a brief word did the Lord speak upon the earth.* (cf Rom 9:28)

## **Chapter X**

### **On the admonition and correction of the friars.**

Let the friars, who are ministers and servants of the other friars, visit and warn their friars and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything which is contrary to their soul and our Rule. Indeed let the friars, who are subjects, remember, that for the sake of God they have renounced their own wills. Whence I firmly command them, to obey their ministers in all things which they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not contrary to their soul or to our Rule. And wherever the friars are, who know and understand, that they themselves are not able to observe the rule spiritually, they should and can have recourse to their ministers. Indeed let the ministers receive them charitably and kindly and be so familiar with them, that they can speak to them and act as lords with their servants; for so it should be, because the ministers are the servants of all the friars.

Indeed I warn and exhort the friars in the Lord Jesus Christ, that they beware *of all* pride, vain glory, envy, *avarice* (cf Lk 12:15), care and solicitude for this age, detraction and murmuring, and that those who are ignorant of letters not care to learn letters; but let them strive, so that above all things they should desire to have the Spirit of the Lord and His holy operation, to pray always to Him with a pure heart and to have humility, [and] patience in persecution and in infirmity, and to love those who persecute and correct and accuse us, because the Lord says, (Mt. 5:44). (Mt. 5:10). "He who has persevered until the end, however, will be saved" (Mt. 10:22).

## **Chapter XI**

### **That the brothers should not enter the monasteries of nuns.**

I firmly command all the brothers not to have suspicious company or conversation with women, and not to enter the monasteries of nuns, except those [friars] to whom special permission has been conceded by the Apostolic See; neither are they to be godfathers of men or women [so that] scandal may not arise on this account among the friars nor concerning them.

## **Chapter XII**

### **Concerning those going among the Saracens and other infidels.**

Let whoever of the friars who by divine inspiration wants to go among the saracens and

other infidels seek permission for that reason from their minister provincial. Indeed the ministers are to grant permission to go to none, except those whom seems to be fit to be sent.

For which sake I enjoin the ministers by obedience, to seek from the Lord Pope one of the cardinals of the Roman Church, who is to be the governor, protector, and corrector of this fraternity, so that always subject and prostrate at the feet of this same Holy Church, stable in the Catholic Faith (cf Col 1:23) we may observe, what we have firmly promised: the poverty and humility and the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **The Confirmation of the Rule**

Let it not be in any way licit to anyone among men to infringe this page of our confirmation, or to contravene it with rash daring. If anyone however would presume to attempt this, let him know himself to have incurred the indignation of the Omnipotent God and of Blessed Peter and Paul, His Apostles.

Given at the Lateran, on the third day of the Kalens of December, in the eight year of Our Pontificate.

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## **RULE OF ST CLARE**

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### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### **IN THE NAME OF THE LORD BEGINS THE FORM OF LIFE OF THE POOR SISTERS**

The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.

Clare, the unworthy servant of Christ and the little plant of the most Blessed Francis, promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church. And, just as at the beginning of her conversion, together with her sisters she promised obedience to the Blessed Francis, so now she promises his successors to observe the same obedience inviolably. And the other sisters shall always be obliged to obey the successors of Blessed Francis and Sister Clare and the other canonically elected Abbesses who succeed her.

### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### **THOSE WHO WISH TO ACCEPT THIS LIFE AND HOW THEY ARE TO BE RECEIVED**

If, by divine inspiration, anyone should come to us desiring to accept this life, the Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the sisters; and if the majority have agreed, she may receive her, after having obtained the permission of the Lord Cardinal

Protector. If she judges [the candidate] acceptable, [the Abbess] should carefully examine her, or have her examined, concerning the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church. And if she believes all these things and is willing to profess them faithfully and to observe them steadfastly to the end; and if she has no husband, or if she has [a husband] who has already entered religious life with the authority of the Bishop of the diocese and has already made a vow of continence, and if there is no impediment to her observance of this life, such as advanced age or ill-health or mental weakness, let the tenor of our life be thoroughly explained to her. If she is suitable, let the words of the holy Gospel be addressed to her that she should go and sell all that she has and take care to distribute the proceeds to the poor (cf. Matthew 19:21). If she cannot do this, her good will suffices.

Let the Abbess and the sisters take care not to be concerned about her temporal affairs, so that she may freely dispose of her possessions as the Lord may inspire her. However, if some counsel is required, let them send her to some discerning and God-fearing persons, according to whose advice her goods may be distributed to the poor.

Afterwards, once her hair has been cut off round her head and her secular clothes set aside, she may be permitted three tunics and a mantle. Thereafter, she may not go outside the monastery except for a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose. When the year of probation is ended, let her be received into obedience, promising to observe perpetually our life and form of poverty.

No one is to receive the veil during the period of probation. The sisters may also have little mantles for convenience and propriety in serving and working. In fact, the Abbess should with discernment provide them with clothing according to the diversity of persons, places, seasons and cold climates, as it shall seem expedient to her by necessity.

Young girls who are received into the monastery before the age established by law should have their hair cut round [their heads]; and, putting aside their secular clothes, they should be clothed in a religious garb, as the Abbess sees fit. However, when they reach the age required by law, they may make their profession clothed in the same way as the others. The Abbess shall carefully provide a Mistress from among the more discerning sisters of the monastery both for these and the other novices. She shall form them diligently in a holy way of life and proper behavior according to the form of our profession.

The same form described above should be observed in the examination and reception of the sisters who serve outside the monastery. These sisters may wear shoes. No one may live with us in the monastery unless she has been received according to the form of our profession.

I admonish, beg, and exhort my sisters to always wear cheap garments out of love of the most holy and beloved Child Who was wrapped in such poor little swaddling clothes and laid in a manger and of His most holy Mother.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

## THE DIVINE OFFICE AND FASTING, CONFESSION AND COMMUNION

The sisters who can read shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the custom of the Friars Minor. They may have breviaries for this, but they should read it without singing. Those who, for some reasonable cause, occasionally are not able to recite their hours by reading them, may, like the other sisters, say the Our Fathers.

Those who do not know how to read shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins; five for Lauds; seven for each of the hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None; twelve, however, for Vespers; seven for Compline. Let them also say for the dead seven Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at Vespers; twelve for Matins, because the sisters who can read are obliged to recite the Office of the Dead. When a sister of our monastery shall have departed this life, however, they should say fifty Our Fathers.

The sisters shall fast at all times. They may eat twice on Christmas, however, no matter on what day it happens to fall. The younger sisters, those who are weak, and those who are serving outside the monastery may be mercifully dispensed as the Abbess sees fit. But the sisters are not bound to corporal fasting in time of manifest necessity.

They shall go to confession, with the permission of the Abbess, at least twelve times a year. They shall take care not to introduce other talk unless it pertains to the confession and the salvation of souls. They should receive Communion seven times [a year], that is, on Christmas, Thursday of Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of Saint Francis, and the Feast of All Saints. The Chaplain may celebrate inside [the enclosure] in order to give Communion to the sisters who are in good health or to those who are ill.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE ELECTION AND OFFICE OF THE ABBESS; THE CHAPTER AND THE OFFICIALS AND THE DISCREETS

The sisters are bound to observe the canonical form in the election of the Abbess. They should quickly arrange to have the Minister General or the Minister Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor present. Let him dispose them, through the Word of God, to perfect harmony and the common good in the election that is to be held. No one should be elected who is not professed. And if a non-professed is elected or somehow given them, she should not be obeyed unless she first professes our form of poverty.

At her death the election of another Abbess shall take place. If at any time it should appear to the entire body of sisters that she is not competent for their service and common welfare, the sisters are bound as quickly as possible to elect another as Abbess and mother according to the form described above.

Whoever is elected should reflect upon the kind of burden she has undertaken and to Whom she must render an account of the flock committed to her (cf. Matthew 12:36). She should strive as well to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy

behaviour than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear. Let her avoid particular friendships, lest by loving some more than others she cause scandal among all. Let her console those who are afflicted. Let her also be the last refuge for those who are troubled, lest the sickness of despair overcome the weak should they fail to find in her the remedies for health. Let her preserve common life in everything, especially in whatever pertains to the church, the dormitory, the refectory, infirmary, and clothing. Let her Vicaress be bound to serve in the same way.

The Abbess is bound to call her sisters together at least once a week in the Chapter, where both she and her sisters should humbly confess their common and public offences and negligences. Let her consult with all her sisters there concerning whatever pertains to the welfare and good of the monastery, for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least [among us].

Let no heavy debt be incurred except with the common consent of the sisters and by reason of manifest necessity, and let this be done by the procurator. Let the Abbess and her sisters, however, be careful that nothing is deposited in the monastery for safekeeping; for such practices often give rise to troubles and scandals.

Let all who hold offices in the monastery be chosen by the common consent of all the sisters to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace. Let at least eight sisters be elected from the more discerning ones in the same way, whose counsel the Abbess should be always bound to use in those matters which our form of life requires. Moreover, the sisters can and should, if it seems useful and expedient, remove the officials and discreets and elect others in their place.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SILENCE, THE PARLOR, AND THE GRILLE**

Let the sisters keep silence from the hour of Compline until Terce, except those who are serving outside the monastery. Let them also continually keep silence in the church, the dormitory, and the refectory, only while they are eating. They may speak discreetly at all times, however, in the infirmary for the recreation and service of the sick. Nevertheless, they can communicate always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice, whatever is necessary.

The sisters may not speak in the parlor or at the grille without the permission of the Abbess or her Vicaress. Let those who have permission not dare to speak in the parlour unless they are in the presence and hearing of two sisters. Let them not presume to go to the grille, moreover, unless there are at least three sisters present [who have been] appointed by the Abbess or her Vicaress from the eight discreets who were elected by all the sisters for the council of the Abbess. Let the Abbess and her Vicaress be themselves bound to observe this form of speaking. [Let the sisters speak] very rarely at the grille and, by all means, never at the door.

Let a curtain be hung inside the grille, which may not be removed except when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone. Let the grille have a wooden door which is well provided with two distinct iron locks, bolts, and bars, so that it can be locked, especially at night, by two keys, one of which the Abbess should keep and the other the sacristan. Let it always be locked except when the Divine Office is being celebrated and for the reasons given above. Under no circumstance whatever, may a sister speak to anyone at the grille before sunrise or after sunset. Let there always be a curtain on the inside of the parlor, which may not be removed.

No one may speak in the parlor during the Lent of Saint Martin and the Greater Lent, except to a priest for Confession or for some other manifest necessity, which is left to the prudence of the Abbess or her Vicar.

## CHAPTER SIX

### THE LACK OF POSSESSIONS

After the Most High Heavenly Father saw fit by His grace to enlighten my heart to do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed Father Saint Francis, shortly after his own conversion, I, together with my sisters, willingly promised him obedience.

When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world, but, instead, regarded such things as great delights, moved by compassion he wrote a form of life for us as follows: "Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Most High King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers to always have that same loving care and solicitude for you as [I have] for them." As long as he lived he diligently fulfilled this and wished that it always be fulfilled by his brothers.

Shortly before his death he once more wrote his last will for us that we--or those, as well, who would come after us--would never turn aside from the holy poverty we had embraced. He said: "I, little brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy Mother and to persevere in this until the end; and I ask and counsel you, my ladies, to live always in this most holy life and poverty. And keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone."

Just as I, together with my sisters, have ever been solicitous to safeguard the holy poverty which we have promised the Lord God and Blessed Francis, so, too, the Abbesses who shall succeed me in office and all the sisters are bound to observe it inviolably to the end: that is to say, by not receiving or having possession or ownership either of themselves or through an intermediary, or even anything that might reasonably be called property, except as much land as necessity requires for the integrity and proper seclusion of the monastery, and this land may not be cultivated except as a garden for the needs of the sisters.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **THE MANNER OF WORKING**

Let the sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working work faithfully and devotedly after the Hour of Terce at work that pertains to a virtuous life and the common good. They must do this in such a way that, while they banish idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute.

At the Chapter, in the presence of all, the Abbess or her Vicaress is bound to assign the work of her hands that each should perform. Let the same be done if alms have been sent by someone for the needs of the sisters, so that a prayer may be offered for them in common. Let all such things be distributed for the common good by the Abbess or her Vicaress with the advice of the discreets.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **THE SISTERS SHALL NOT ACQUIRE ANYTHING AS THEIR OWN; BEGGING ALMS; THE SICK SISTERS**

Let the sisters not appropriate anything, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all; instead, as pilgrims and strangers in this world who serve the Lord in poverty and humility, let them confidently send for alms. Nor should they be ashamed, since the Lord made Himself poor in this world for us. This is that summit of the highest poverty which has established you, my dearest sisters, heiresses and queens of the kingdom of heaven; it has made you poor in the things [of this world] but exalted you in virtue.

Let this be your portion which leads into the land of the living (cf. Psalm 141:6). Clinging totally to this, my most beloved sisters, do not wish to have anything else forever under heaven for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and His most holy Mother.

Let no sister be permitted to send letters or to receive or give away anything outside the monastery without the permission of the Abbess. Let it not be permitted to have anything that the Abbess has not given or allowed. Should anything be sent to a sister by her relatives or others, let the Abbess give it to the sister. If she needs it, the sister may use it; otherwise, let her in all charity give it to a sister who does need it. If, however, money is sent to her, the Abbess, with the advice of the discreets, may provide for the needs of the sister.

Concerning the sick sisters, let the Abbess be strictly bound to inquire diligently, by herself and through other sisters, what their illness requires both by way of counsel as well as food and other necessities. Let her provide for them charitably and kindly according to the resources of the place. [Let this be done] because all are bound to serve and provide for their sisters who are ill just as they would wish to be served

themselves if they were suffering from any illness. Let each one confidently manifest her needs to the other. For if a mother loves and nourishes her child according to the flesh, should not a sister love and nourish her sister according to the Spirit even more lovingly?

Those who are ill may lay on sacks filled with straw and may use feather pillows for their heads; those who need woolen stockings and quilts may use them. When the sick sisters are visited by those who enter the monastery, they may answer them with brevity, each responding with some good words to those who speak to them. But the other sisters who have permission [to speak] may not dare to speak to those who enter the monastery unless in the presence and hearing of the two sister-discreets assigned by the Abbess or her Vicaress. Let the Abbess and her Vicaress, as well, be bound to observe this manner of speaking.

## CHAPTER NINE

### THE PENANCE TO BE IMPOSED ON THE SISTERS WHO SIN; THE SISTERS WHO SERVE OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY

If any sister, at the instigation of the enemy, has sinned mortally against the form of our profession, and, if after having been admonished two or three times by the Abbess or other sisters, she does not amend, let her eat bread and water on the floor before all the sisters in the refectory for as many days as she shall have been obstinate. If it seems advisable to the Abbess, let her be subjected to even greater punishment.

Meanwhile, as long as she remains obstinate, let the prayer be that the Lord will enlighten her heart to do penance. The Abbess and her sisters, however, should beware not to become angry or disturbed on account of anyone's sin, for anger and disturbance prevent charity in oneself and in others.

If it should happen--may it never be so--that an occasion of trouble or scandal should arise between sister and sister through a word or gesture, let she who was the cause of the trouble, before offering her gift of prayer to the Lord, not only prostrate herself humbly at once at the feet of the other and ask pardon, but also beg her simply to intercede for her to the Lord that He might forgive her. Let the other sister, mindful of that word of the Lord--"If you do not forgive from the heart, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you" (Matthew 6:15;18:35)--generously pardon her sister every wrong she has done her.

Let the sisters who serve outside the monastery not linger outside unless some manifest necessity requires it. Let them conduct themselves virtuously and say little, so that those who see them may always be edified. Let them strictly beware of having suspicious meetings and dealings with others. They may not be godmothers of men or women lest gossip or trouble arise because of this. Let them not presume to repeat the gossip of the world inside the monastery. Let them be strictly bound not to repeat outside the monastery anything that was said or done within which could cause scandal. If anyone should innocently offend in these two matters, let it be left to the prudence of

the Abbess to mercifully impose a penance on her. But if a sister does this through a vicious habit, let the Abbess, with the advice of her discreets, impose a penance on her according to the nature of the fault.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **THE ADMONITION AND CORRECTION OF THE SISTERS**

Let the Abbess admonish and visit her sisters, and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and the form of our profession. Let the sisters, however, who are subjects, remember that they have renounced their wills for God's sake. Let them, therefore, be firmly bound to obey their Abbess in all the things they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against their soul and our profession.

Let the Abbess, on her part, be so familiar with them that they can speak and act with her as ladies do with their servant. For this is the way it should be: the Abbess should be the servant of all the sisters.

In fact, I admonish and exhort the sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, care and anxiety about this world, detraction and murmuring, dissension and division. Let them be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love, which is the bond of perfection.

Let those who do not know how to read not be eager to learn. Let them rather devote themselves to what they should desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us, for the Lord says: Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs' is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10). But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22).

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN**

### **THE CUSTODY OF THE ENCLOSURE**

Let the portress be mature in her manner of acting, discerning, and of a suitable age. Let her remain in an open cell without a door during the day. Let a suitable companion be assigned to her who may take her place in everything whenever necessary.

Let the door be well secured by two different iron locks, with bars and bolts, so that, especially at night, it may be locked with two keys, one of which the portress may have, the other the Abbess. Let it never be left without a guard and securely locked with one key.

Let them most diligently take care to see that the door is never left open, except when this can hardly be conveniently avoided. Let it never be opened to anyone who

wishes to enter, except to those who have been given permission by the Supreme Pontiff or our Lord Cardinal. The sisters may not allow anyone to enter the monastery before sunrise or to remain within after sunset, unless a manifest, reasonable, and unavoidable cause demands otherwise.

If a bishop has permission to offer Mass within the enclosure, either for the blessing of an Abbess or for the consecration of one of the sisters as a nun or for any other reason, let him be satisfied with both as few and virtuous companions and assistants as possible. Whenever it is necessary for other men to enter the monastery to do some work, let the Abbess carefully post a suitable person at the door, who may only open it to those assigned for work and to no one else. Let the sisters be extremely careful at such times not to be seen by those who enter.

## **CHAPTER TWELVE**

### **THE VISITATOR, THE CHAPLAIN, AND THE CARDINAL PROTECTOR**

Let our Visitor always be taken from the Order of the Friars Minor according to the will and command of our Cardinal. Let him be the kind of person who is well known for his integrity and good manner of living. His duty shall be to correct any excesses against the form of our profession, whether these be in head or in the members.

Taking his stand in a public place, that he can be seen by others, let him speak with several and with each one concerning the matters that pertain to the duty of the visitation as he sees best.

We ask as a favor of the same Order a chaplain and a clerical companion of good reputation, of prudent discernment and two lay brothers, lovers of a holy and upright way of life, in support of our poverty, as we have always mercifully had from the aforesaid Order of Friars Minor, in light of the love of God and our Blessed Francis.

Let the chaplain not be permitted to enter the monastery without a companion. When they enter, let them remain in an open place, in such a way that they can always see each other and be seen by others. They may enter the enclosure for the confession of the sick who cannot go to the parlor, for their Communion, for the Last Anointing and the Prayers of the Dying.

Suitable and sufficient outsiders may enter, moreover, according to the prudence of the Abbess, for funeral services and on the solemnity of Masses for the Dead, for digging or opening a grave, or also for making arrangements for it. Let the sisters be strictly bound to always have that Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, who has been delegated by the Lord Pope for the Friars Minor, as Governor, Protector, and Corrector, that always submissive and subject at the feet of that holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may always observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and the Holy Gospel we have firmly promised. Amen.

## The Testament of Saint Francis

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This is how the Lord gave me, brother Francis, the power to do penance. When I was in sin the sight of lepers was too bitter for me. And the Lord himself led me among them, and I pitied and helped them. And when I left them I discovered that what had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness in my soul and body. And shortly afterward I rose and left the world.

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I prayed simply, saying, "We adore you, Lord Jesus Christ, in all your churches throughout the world, and we bless you because you redeemed the world through your holy cross." Later God gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the form of the Holy Roman Church that even if they persecuted me I would still run back to them, because of their position. And if I had all the wisdom of Solomon and came upon some poor little priests in their parishes, I would preach there only if they wished me to do so. And I want to fear, love and honor these and all others as my lords. And I do not even want to think about there being any sin in them, because I see the Son of God in them and they are my lords. And I do this because in this world I physically see the most high Son of God only in his most holy body and blood, which they receive and they alone administer to others. And I want this holy mystery to be honored above all things, venerated, and kept in costly containers. Whenever I find his holy names or words in improper places I pick them up and ask that they be collected and stored in a proper place. And we ought to honor and venerate all theologians and those who administer the holy divine Word, for they administer to us spirit and life.

And when God gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the holy gospel. I had it written in few words and simply, and the lord pope confirmed it for me. And those who came to receive life gave all that they had to the poor and were content with one tunic patched inside and out, with a cord and trousers. And we did not wish to have more.

We who were clerics said the office like other clerics, and the lay brothers said the "Our Father," and we gladly stayed in churches. And we were ignorant and subject to all. And I worked with my hands, and want to do so still. And I definitely want all the other brothers to work at some honest job. Those who don't know how should learn, not because they want to receive wages but as an example and to avoid idleness. And when our wages are withheld from us, let us return to the Lord's table, begging alms from door to door. The Lord revealed what greeting we should use: "The Lord give you peace."

The brothers must be careful not to accept any churches, poor dwellings, or anything else constructed for them unless these buildings reflect the holy poverty promised by us in the rule. We should always live in these places as strangers and pilgrims. I firmly command all the brothers, by the obedience they owe me, that wherever they are they should not dare to ask either directly or through an intermediary for any letter from the Roman court to secure a church or any other place,

to protect their preaching, or to prevent persecution of their bodies; but wherever they are not received, they should flee into another land and do penance with God's blessing.

And I firmly wish to obey the minister general of this brotherhood, and any other guardian the minister should want to give me. And I want to be such a captive in his hands that I cannot go anywhere or do anything without his desire and command, because he is my lord. And although I am simple and ill, I always want to have a cleric who can perform the office for me, as the rule states. And all the other brothers are thus bound to obey their guardians and perform the office according to the rule. And whenever some are found who do not wish to perform the office according to the rule and want to change it, or who are not Catholic in their beliefs, then all the brothers wherever they may be are bound by obedience to turn such people over to the custodian nearest the place where they found them. The custodian in turn is bound by obedience to guard him strongly like a man in chains, day and night, so that he cannot possibly escape from his hands until he personally places him in the hands of his minister. And the minister is bound by obedience to place him in the care of brothers who will guard him night and day like a man in chains until they turn him over to our lord bishop of Ostia, who is the lord protector and corrector of the whole brotherhood.

And the brothers must not say, "This is another rule," for it is a recollection, admonition, exhortation and my testament which I, poor brother Francis, make for you my brothers, so that we may observe the rule we have promised to God in a more Catholic manner. And the general minister and all other ministers and custodians are bound by obedience not to add or subtract from these words. And they must always have this writing with them in addition to the rule. And in all chapter meetings held by them, when they read the rule, they must also read these words.

And I firmly forbid my brothers, both clerics and laymen, to place glosses on the rule or say, "This is what it means." But just as the Lord gave me the power to compose and write both the rule and these words simply and purely, so you must understand them simply and without gloss and observe them by holy action until the end.

And whoever observes them will be filled in heaven with a blessing of the most high Father and on earth he will be filled with the blessing of his beloved Son, with the Holy Spirit the Comforter and all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, brother Francis, your servant insofar as I can, internally and externally confirm for you this holy blessing.

### **The Form of Life of Clare of Assisi (1253)**

<b>The Form of Life of Clare of Assisi (1253)</b>	<b>Rule of Blessed Isabella (as approved by Urban IV – 1263)</b>
1. Called “The Form of life of the order of the Poor Sisters” – 1253 as approved by Pope Innocent IV. Commonly called the rule of Saint Clare, the use of ‘Form of Life’ comes	1. Called “ Rule of the Enclosed Sisters Minor” – 1263 as approved by Pope Urban IV. Commonly – Urbanite rule.

<p>from the Latin text.</p> <p>2. Addressed to Clare, abbess and the other sisters of the monastery of San Damiano in Assisi.</p> <p><b>PROLOGUE</b></p> <p>Innocent, Bishop , Servant of the servants of God, to his beloved daughters in Christ, Clare, Abbess, and the other sisters of the monastery of San Damiano in Assisi: health and apostolic blessing.</p> <p><b>CHAPTER ONE</b></p> <p><b>IN THE NAME OF THE LORD BEGINS THE FORM OF LIFE OF THE POOR SISTERS</b></p> <p>The form of life of the Order of the Poor Sisters that Blessed Francis established is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity.</p> <p>Clare, the unworthy servant of Christ and the little plant of the most Blessed Francis, promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church. And, just as at the beginning of her conversion, together with her sisters she promised obedience to the Blessed Francis, so now she promises his successors to observe the same obedience</p>	<p>2. Addressed to abbess and community of the sisters minor of the monastery of the Humility of the Blessed Mary, of the diocese of Paris.</p> <p><b>PROLOGUE</b></p> <p>Urban bishop, servant of the servants of God. To the beloved daughters in Christ, the abbess and community of the sisters minor of the monastery of the Humility of the Blessed Mary, of the diocese of Paris. Health and apostolic blessing.</p> <p>...that it be called the Rule of the Enclosed Sisters Minor in future... This rule and Life of these Enclosed Sisters Minor we have had noted below. It is this:...</p> <p><b>1) ENTRANCE INTO THE MONASTERY AND RELIGIOUS PROFESSION</b></p> <p>Whoever, inspired by the Holy Spirit, embraces this order, following the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and his most holy Mother, according to the counsel of evangelical perfection, shall live in obedience, in chastity and without property, and as a hidden treasure of the glorious King, shall remain enclosed all the time of her life.</p> <p>After being professed, they shall be obliged in virtue of obedience to remain for the whole time of their life within the enclosure of the monastery...</p>
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<p>inviolably. And the other sisters shall always be obliged to obey the successors of Blessed Francis and Sister Clare and the other canonically elected Abbesses who succeed her.</p> <p>3. Form of Life : “to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, by living in obedience, without anything of one's own, and in chastity”.</p> <p>4. “promises obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his canonically elected successors, and to the Roman Church”.</p>	<p>3. “shall live in obedience, in chastity and without property, and as a hidden treasure of the glorious King, shall remain enclosed all the time of her life.”</p> <p>4. “..shall observe diligently the law of this life. After being professed, they shall be obliged in virtue of obedience to remain for the whole time of their life within the enclosure of the monastery...”</p>
<p><b>CHAPTER TWO</b></p> <p><b>THOSE WHO WISH TO ACCEPT THIS LIFE AND HOW THEY ARE TO BE RECEIVED</b></p> <p>5. “the Abbess is required to seek the consent of all the sisters; and if the majority have agreed, she may receive her, after having obtained the permission of the Lord Cardinal Protector”.</p> <p>6. “If she judges [the candidate] acceptable, [the Abbess] should carefully examine her, or have her examined, concerning the Catholic faith and the sacraments of the Church. And if she believes all these things and is willing to profess them faithfully and to observe them steadfastly to the end;”</p> <p>7. “and if she has no husband, or if she has [a husband] who has already entered religious life with the authority of the Bishop of the diocese and has already made a vow of continence, and if there is</p>	<p>5. Does not mention consent by all sisters (unless there is an exception to be made, see point 7 below)</p> <p>6. Does not mention examination of Faith. However, it only mentions that “All those who wish to undertake this religion shall be instructed on the hard and difficult things by which one travels to the fatherland, and which they must observe according to this religion”. (similar to point 8 – Clare’s rule)</p> <p>7. “No one shall be received who is considered unequal to and unsuitable for the observance of this life, because of old age or some infirmity or being simple-minded, unless perhaps occasionally,</p>

<p>no impediment to her observance of this life, such as advanced age or ill-health or mental weakness,”</p> <p>8. “let the tenor of our life be thoroughly explained to her“.</p> <p>9. “If she is suitable, let the words of the holy Gospel be addressed to her that she should go and sell all that she has and take care to distribute the proceeds to the poor (cf. Matthew 19:21). If she cannot do this, her good will suffices. Let the Abbess and the sisters take care not to be concerned about her temporal affairs, so that she may freely dispose of her possessions as the Lord may inspire her. However, if some counsel is required, let them send her to some discerning and God-fearing persons, according to whose advice her goods may be distributed to the poor”.</p> <p>10. “Afterwards, once her hair has been cut off round her head and her secular clothes set aside, she may be permitted three tunics and a mantle”.</p>	<p>when a very reasonable cause demands it, by consent of the sister discreet, a dispensation is sometimes granted by the afore-mentioned”.</p> <p>8. see point 6 above</p> <p>9. No mention of selling one’s possessions</p> <p>10. “ ...as soon as they are received within the enclosure, having had their hair cut, shall put off secular clothing if they have understanding.”</p> <p>From (2) Clothing, Dormitory and Beds  “...if she wishes, have two tunics, or three, or even four, according as seems fit to the abbess. However, all shall take care to avoid excess of clothes in so far as they can, in a good manner”.</p>
<p>11. “Thereafter, she may not go outside the monastery except for a useful, reasonable, evident, and approved purpose”.</p>	<p>11. Enclosure is mentioned very early, together with the rule. See Point 3 and 4 above. From (1) Entrance into the Monastery... there are some exceptions for not remaining in the Monastery. “unless for the sake of building up this Order or for reasons of its government, some may be sent to a place of the same Order; who shall be allowed to return to</p>

<p>12. “When the year of probation is ended, let her be received into obedience, promising to observe perpetually our life and form of poverty”.</p>	<p>the monastery from which they were sent by permission of those of the second place, if it seems expedient to the ministers themselves or to another by the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, or of the provincial of that province in which the monastery is located. But if it should happen that, through the onset of a hostile attack or through the rush of flood waters, the walls of the monastery are destroyed, or that the monastery itself is burned, or is disturbed or destroyed by some other such cause, or that ruin threatens the buildings or because at time of enemy onslaughts, that the place is in such a condition that persons cannot remain there without manifest and grave danger, and they cannot await the permission and advice of the abovementioned minister, by counsel and consent of the whole community and command of the abbess, the sisters may take themselves to another safe place in which, if possible, they shall remain enclosed until, after full deliberation, it is decided what they should do. But if the community should wish for some other clear reason to build their whole monastery elsewhere, then, with the permission of the minister general, the sisters may transfer themselves to another place. The dead, both professed as well as novices or extern sisters, shall be buried within the enclosure of the monastery.</p> <p>12. Includes the manner of profession. Makes profession into the hands of the abbess before the community. “Into your hands, Mother, I sister so-and-so promise God and the blessed Mary ever virgin and blessed Francis and all the saints, to live for the whole time of my life according to the Rule granted to our Order by the Lord</p>
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<p>13. No mention</p>	<p>Pope Alexander IV, as corrected and approved by the Lord Pope Urban IV, in obedience and chastity and without property, and also under enclosure according as ordained by the same rule.</p> <p>13. "...they may not be present at chapter within the year; however when the space of one year is completed, they shall make profession..."</p>
<p>14. "No one is to receive the veil during the period of probation. The sisters may also have little mantles for convenience and propriety in serving and working. In fact, the Abbess should with discernment provide them with clothing according to the diversity of persons, places, seasons and cold climates, as it shall seem expedient to her by necessity".</p>	<p>14. From (2) Clothing, Dormitory and Beds More details on dressing than from Clare's rule "They shall also have one or two mantles of suitable length and width. But let these garments be of poor material, both in price and color. No one however shall wear an outer tunic that is totally white or black. The sisters, but only after they are professed, may have a cord as a cincture, completely devoid of curiousness. They shall cover their heads uniformly and honestly with totally white bands or bonnets, not however precious ones, so that the forehead, cheeks and neck are fittingly covered; for it is unbecoming that the spouse of the eternal King should expose herself to another, or take pleasure in another. They shall also wear a black veil extended over the head, of such width and length that it falls on both sides to the shoulders, and behind extends as far as is fitting beyond the capuch, and they can take this off at night, and sometimes by day, with the permission of the abbess. The sisters shall certain have and observe these things, and also the externs, who should not go outside. But other externs and novices shall wear a woolen cord and a white veil over their heads. The abbess however shall provide for the footwear of the sisters and the externs within the enclosure, according as she</p>

<p>15. “Young girls who are received into the monastery before the age established by law should have their hair cut round [their heads]; and, putting aside their secular clothes, they should be clothed in a religious garb, as the Abbess sees fit. However, when they reach the age required by law, they may make their profession clothed in the same way as the others”.</p> <p>16. “The Abbess shall carefully provide a Mistress from among the more discerning sisters of the monastery both for these and the other novices. She shall form them diligently in a holy way of life and proper behavior according to the form of our profession”.</p>	<p>thinks it expedient for them”.</p> <p>15. No mention</p> <p>16. From (1) “a prudent mistress shall be granted to them, one who shall instruct the sisters privately in holy conduct and inflame them in fervor of devotion, and who shall teach them to bear in the sweetness of charity those things which must be borne according to this holy religion, and who shall diligently correct where correction is needed”.</p>
<p>17. “The same form described above should be observed in the examination and reception of the sisters who serve outside the monastery. These sisters may wear shoes”.</p> <p>18. “No one may live with us in the monastery unless she has been received according to the form of our profession”.</p> <p>19. “I admonish, beg, and exhort my sisters to always wear cheap garments out of love of the most holy and beloved Child Who was wrapped in such poor little swaddling clothes and laid in a manger and of His most holy Mother”.</p>	<p>17. From (2) Clothing, Dormitory and Beds “The abbess however shall provide for the footwear of the sisters and the externs within the enclosure, according as she thinks it expedient for them”. See point 14 above</p> <p>18. No mention</p> <p>19. From (2) Clothing, Dormitory and Beds “...if she wishes, have two tunics, or three, or even four, according as seems fit to the abbess. However, all shall take care to avoid excess of clothes in so far as they can, in a good manner”. No mention of ‘out of love’, poverty for Christ’s sake. See Point 14 But let these garments be of poor material, both in</p>

<p><b>CHAPTER THREE</b></p> <p><b>THE DIVINE OFFICE AND FASTING, CONFESSION AND COMMUNION</b></p> <p>20. The sisters who can read shall celebrate the Divine Office according to the custom of the Friars Minor. They may have breviaries for this, but they should read it without singing. Those who, for some reasonable cause, occasionally are not able to recite their hours by reading them, may, like the other sisters, say the Our Fathers. Those who do not know how to read shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins; five for Lauds; seven for each of the hours of Prime, Terce, Sext, and None; twelve, however, for Vespers; seven for Compline. Let them also say for the dead seven Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at Vespers; twelve for Matins, because the sisters who can read are obliged to recite the Office of the Dead. When a sister of our monastery shall have departed this life, however, they should say fifty Our Fathers.</p>	<p>price and color.</p> <p><b>(3) Divine Office, Spirit of Prayer, Sacraments</b></p> <p>20. Similar except those in (brackets ) “Regarding the divine Office, to be recited day and night for the praise and glory of God, let this be observed: those sisters who can read and chant shall celebrate the Office reverently according to the custom of the friars minor, but with gravity and modesty; the others shall say twenty-four Our Fathers for Matins; five for Lauds; for prime, terce, sext and none, and compline, seven; for vespers twelve. This same manner shall be observed throughout for the Office of the most blessed Virgin Mary. And they shall pray for the dead”. (If some sisters are found suitable and talented, the abbess, if she judges fit, shall have them instructed, appointing a suitable and honest mistress to educate them in chant and in the divine offices.)</p>
<p>21.</p>	<p>21. “But the sisters and externs , at the time and places laid down, as shall have been ordained, shall engage in useful and honest labors under this provision that, excluding idleness the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, to which other temporal things should contribute; and to this the spouse of Christ should dedicate herself, so that there she may enjoy the conversations and consolations of her Spouse”. From (4) Fasting and Care of the Sick</p>
<p>22. The sisters shall fast at all times. They</p>	<p>22. A lot is said about fasting “The sisters</p>

<p>may eat twice on Christmas, however, no matter on what day it happens to fall. The younger sisters, those who are weak, and those who are serving outside the monastery may be mercifully dispensed as the Abbess sees fit. But the sisters are not bound to corporal fasting in time of manifest necessity.</p>	<p>and the externs shall fast from the feast of blessed Francis until the feast of the Lord's Resurrection, and from the Ascension of the Lord until Pentecost... but exception is made for Sundays, the solemnities of All Saints, Christmas, St. Stephen, St. John the Evangelist, the Circumcision, the Epiphany and the Purification. However, except for Fridays and fasts universally laid down by the Church, they are not bound to fast from the Resurrection of the Lord until the Ascension of the Lord, and from Pentecost to the feast of blessed Francis. They may also lawfully use wine, fish, eggs, cheese and milk foods. All other times they can use these. Sisters who are in full health and the externs shall abstain from flesh at all times. But on Fridays they shall always fast without fish, unless the abbess has dispensed for a cause common to the community, such as when some solemn feast is celebrated on a Friday. The young who are under fifteen years of age or the old or those manifestly weak or infirm shall by no means be obliged to the above law of fast and abstinence; according to their weakness, the abbess may mercifully provide for them with meat and other necessary things, always in common and with equity. Apart from the advent of the Lord, the greater Lent, Fridays and fasts instituted by the Church, the abbess, according as she judges, may dispense extern sisters and young people under eighteen years from the fast. The healthy sisters at the time of their bleeding, which ends in three days, are not obliged to fast outside the greater Lent and on Friday, the advent of the Lord, and the time within Ascension and Pentecost, and fasts universally instituted by the Church. Let the abbess guard against allowing the</p>
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<p>the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, the Feast of Saint Francis, and the Feast of All Saints. The Chaplain may celebrate inside [the enclosure] in order to give Communion to the sisters who are in good health or to those who are ill.</p> <p><b>CHAPTER FOUR</b></p> <p><b>THE ELECTION AND OFFICE OF THE ABBESS; THE CHAPTER AND THE OFFICIALS AND THE DISCREETS</b></p> <p>25. The sisters are bound to observe the canonical form in the election of the Abbess. They should quickly arrange to have the Minister General or the Minister Provincial of the Order of Friars Minor present. Let him dispose them, through the Word of God, to perfect harmony and the common good in the election that is to be held.</p>	<p>reasonable cause omits it by permission of the abbess.” Some differences in number of times of communion and days can be seen here.</p> <p><b>(9) Election and Authority of the Abbess</b></p> <p>25. The election of the abbess shall freely pertain to the community; her confirmation, and rejection, that is, her removal, shall be done by the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor, if he is in the province; and in his absence, by the provincial of that province in which the afore-mentioned monastery is established; to these the ordering, governing, care and visitation, correction and reformation of this order belongs, both through themselves and through the visitators, on whom the aforesaid offices have been imposed according to place and time through these visitators the abbess can be released from office, as expressed above.</p>
<p>26. No one should be elected who is not professed. And if a non-professed is elected or somehow given them, she should not be obeyed unless she first professes our form of poverty.</p>	<p>26. Hence in virtue of obedience we firmly command and enjoin on the abbesses and other sisters of the religion, that they obey the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor and the provincial of that province in which the aforementioned monastery is located, in those things which are not against their soul and the present Rule, since we wish them always to be subject to their government. Likewise we enjoin by obedience on all the sisters of this religion that they diligently obey the abbess, after</p>

<p>27. At her death the election of another Abbess shall take place. If at any time it should appear to the entire body of sisters that she is not competent for their service and common welfare, the sisters are bound as quickly as possible to elect another as Abbess and mother according to the form described above.</p> <p>28. Whoever is elected should reflect upon the kind of burden she has undertaken and to Whom she must render an account of the flock committed to her (cf. Matthew 12:36). She should strive as well to preside over the others more by her virtues and holy behavior than by her office, so that, moved by her example, the sisters may obey her more out of love than out of fear. Let her avoid particular friendships, lest by loving some more than others she cause scandal among all. Let her console those who are afflicted. Let her also be the last refuge for those who are troubled, lest the sickness of despair overcome the weak should they fail to find in her the remedies for health. Let her preserve common life in everything, especially in whatever pertains to the church, the dormitory, the refectory, infirmary, and clothing. Let her Vicar be bound to serve in the same way. The Abbess is bound to call her sisters together at least once a week in the</p>	<p>she has received confirmation in office, as long as she remains in it in Christ. But when for reasons of infirmity or any reason whatever the community lacks the government of an abbess, the sisters may elect for themselves a president, whom they are obliged to obey until the abbess returns to her office. The aforementioned president meanwhile shall carry out what pertains to the office of abbess.</p> <p>27. No mention. Only similar point is “the abbess can be released from office” see point 25 above.</p> <p>28. No mention</p>
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<p>Chapter, where both she and her sisters should humbly confess their common and public offenses and negligences. Let her consult with all her sisters there concerning whatever pertains to the welfare and good of the monastery, for the Lord frequently reveals what is best to the least [among us]. Let no heavy debt be incurred except with the common consent of the sisters and by reason of manifest necessity, and let this be done by the procurator. Let the Abbess and her sisters, however, be careful that nothing is deposited in the monastery for safekeeping; for such practices often give rise to troubles and scandals.</p>	
<p>29. Let all who hold offices in the monastery be chosen by the common consent of all the sisters to preserve the unity of mutual love and peace. Let at least eight sisters be elected from the more discerning ones in the same way, whose counsel the Abbess should be always bound to use in those matters which our form of life requires. Moreover, the sisters can and should, if it seems useful and expedient, remove the officials and discreets and elect others in their place.</p> <p><b>CHAPTER FIVE</b></p> <p><b>SILENCE, THE PARLOR, AND THE GRILLE</b></p> <p>30. Let the sisters keep silence from the hour of Compline until Terce, except those who are serving outside the monastery. Let them also continually keep silence in the church, the dormitory, and the</p>	<p>29. No mention</p> <p><b>(5) Silence, Recollection, Enclosure</b></p> <p>One major difference is that of seeking permission to speak to another sister which can only take place in the parlor and with two other sisters to listen to them.</p> <p>30. Continual Silence shall be observed unbroken in this manner: Silence shall thus be observed by all, that they speak neither among themselves nor with any other without permission, except the</p>

<p>refectory, only while they are eating. They may speak discreetly at all times, however, in the infirmary for the recreation and service of the sick. Nevertheless, they can communicate always and everywhere, briefly and in a low tone of voice, whatever is necessary.</p> <p>Note: Enclosure is found in Chapter Eleven.</p> <p>See Point 51 below</p> <p>Confession is mentioned in point 34 below.</p>	<p>weak and infirm. Nevertheless, let the abbess or president take diligent care how she grants the sisters permission to speak, as to where, when, and how. Let all strive to use religious and honest signs. On double feasts and solemnities of the apostles, and on any other days, as judged fit by the abbess, they may speak from the hour of none until vespers, or any other suitable hour, on the Lord Jesus Christ and the occurring solemnity and the pious examples of the saints, and of other lawful and honest things. When anyone seeks permission to speak with another of the sisters, she shall first inform the abbess or president; and, if she grants it, this sister shall always have two sisters with her, as she goes to the parlor, who see the sister talking and can hear what is said by both parties. But let the sisters be on their guard, when they have to lest they dissipate themselves foolishly in useless words; nor should they delay too long in conversations. “The abbess shall have the law of the present Rule kept absolutely, and she shall observe it carefully herself, so that all excuse for conversation is totally removed except that she herself can speak to her sisters at appropriate times and places as she thinks fit before God. During their illness, the infirm and those who serve them can converse in the infirmary, according to the disposition of the abbess, and also the healthy who, with the abbess’s permission, have entered the infirmary for a charitable visit may speak with the infirm sisters.” But when any sisters wishes to go to confession, she shall do so alone in the parlor with the priest. Their confessors, shall absolve them of all their sins.</p>
<p>31. The sisters may not speak in the parlor</p>	<p>31. No one shall speak through the iron</p>

<p>or at the grille without the permission of the Abbess or her Vicaress. Let those who have permission not dare to speak in the parlor unless they are in the presence and hearing of two sisters. Let them not presume to go to the grille, moreover, unless there are at least three sisters present [who have been] appointed by the Abbess or her Vicaress from the eight discreetly who were elected by all the sisters for the council of the Abbess. Let the Abbess and her Vicaress be themselves bound to observe this form of speaking. [Let the sisters speak] very rarely at the grille and, by all means, never at the door.</p> <p>32. Let a curtain be hung inside the grille which may not be removed except when the Word of God is preached or when a sister is speaking with someone. Let the grille have a wooden door which is well provided with two distinct iron locks, bolts, and bars, so that it can be locked, especially at night, by two keys, one of which the Abbess should keep and the other the sacristan. Let it always be locked except when the Divine Office is being celebrated and for the reasons given above.</p> <p>33. Under no circumstance whatever, may a sister speak to anyone at the grille before sunrise or after sun- set.</p>	<p>grille through which they receive communion and hear the Office and sermon; unless perhaps sometimes, when a reasonable cause demands it; and then it shall be done in company, as prescribed for the parlor. But this shall be done most rarely. “Without the permission of the minister, there shall be but one turn in the convent, through which necessary things are given to the sisters, and things taken away as required. This shall be so arranged that nothing can be seen through it. No sister may speak with anyone through it, with the exception of the two who guard it vigilantly as they do the door. “</p> <p>32. No mention of who is keeping the keys to the grille A black cloth shall be placed on the inside of this grille so that in no way can any of the sisters be seen through it, not anything outside be seen from within unless it be drawn aside for a reasonable cause sometimes, with the abbess’s permission. In the same way a black cloth shall be retained in the parlor which may sometimes be removed by permission of the abbess and the consent of the majority of the community. The grille shall also have wooden doors with locks and keys, so that they always remain closed, unless for the reasons named above. The parlor shall be strongly constructed of many thick iron plates. The parlors for confessions shall be made in the church or other appropriate place, as judged fit by the minister. But the grille shall be carefully and strongly constructed of many thick iron plates.</p> <p>33. No mention</p>
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<p>34. Let there always be a curtain on the inside of the parlor, which may not be removed. No one may speak in the parlor during the Lent of Saint Martin and the Greater Lent, except to a priest for Confession or for some other manifest necessity, which is left to the prudence of the Abbess or her Vicaress.</p> <p>35. Locking of grille by two keys. See point 32 above.</p>	<p>34. See point 30 above about permitted to go for confession alone.</p> <p>35. There shall be a small window with a little iron door at one side alone of the afore-mentioned grille, through which the priest by stretching out his hand can give the Body of the Lord to the sisters; no one shall be able to put a hand through the grille through any other part of it. The aforesaid little door shall be locked with a double key, unless when the sisters receive the Body of the Lord, and hear a sermon by a suitable honest person or for any other reasonable cause decided by the abbess's judgment.</p>
<p><b>36. CHAPTER SIX</b></p> <p><b>THE LACK OF POSSESSIONS</b></p> <p>After the Most High Heavenly Father saw fit by His grace to enlighten my heart to do penance according to the example and teaching of our most blessed Father Saint Francis, shortly after his own conversion, I, together with my sisters, willingly promised him obedience. When the Blessed Father saw we had no fear of poverty, hard work, trial, shame, or contempt of the world, but, instead, regarded such things as great delights, moved by compassion he wrote a form of life for us as follows: "Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and servants of the Most High King, the heavenly Father, and have taken</p>	

the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers to always have that same loving care and solicitude for you as [I have] for them." As long as he lived he diligently fulfilled this and wished that it always be fulfilled by his brothers. Shortly before his death he once more wrote his last will for us that we--or those, as well, who would come after us--would never turn aside from the holy poverty we had embraced. He said: "I, little brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy Mother and to persevere in this until the end; and I ask and counsel you, my ladies, to live always in this most holy life and poverty. And keep most careful watch that you never depart from this by reason of the teaching or advice of anyone." Just as I, together with my sisters, have ever been solicitous to safeguard the holy poverty which we have promised the Lord God and Blessed Francis, so, too, the Abbesses who shall succeed me in office and all the sisters are bound to observe it inviolably to the end: that is to say, by not receiving or having possession or ownership either of themselves or through an intermediary, or even anything that might reasonably be called property, except as much land as necessity requires for the integrity and proper seclusion of the monastery, and this land may not be cultivated except as a garden for the needs of the sisters.

### **37. CHAPTER SEVEN**

#### **THE MANNER OF WORKING**

Let the sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working work faithfully and

devotedly after the Hour of Terce at work that pertains to a virtuous life and the common good. They must do this in such a way that, while they banish idleness, the enemy of the soul, they do not extinguish the Spirit of holy prayer and devotion to which all other things of our earthly existence must contribute. At the Chapter, in the presence of all, the Abbess or her Vicaress is bound to assign the work of her hands that each should perform. Let the same be done if alms have been sent by someone for the needs of the sisters, so that a prayer may be offered for them in common. Let all such things be distributed for the common good by the Abbess or her Vicaress with the advice of the discreet.

### **38. CHAPTER EIGHT**

#### **THE SISTERS SHALL NOT ACQUIRE ANYTHING AS THEIR OWN; BEGGING ALMS; THE SICK SISTERS**

Let the sisters not appropriate anything, neither a house nor a place nor anything at all; instead, as pilgrims and strangers in this world who serve the Lord in poverty and humility, let them confidently send for alms. Nor should they be ashamed, since the Lord made Himself poor in this world for us. This is that summit of the highest poverty which has established you, my dearest sisters, heiresses and queens of the kingdom of heaven; it has made you poor in the things [of this world] but exalted you in virtue. Let this be your portion which leads into the land of the living (cf. Psalm 141:6). Clinging totally to this, my most beloved sisters, do not wish to have anything else forever under heaven for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and His most holy Mother. Let no

sister be permitted to send letters or to receive or give away anything outside the monastery without the permission of the Abbess. Let it not be permitted to have anything that the Abbess has not given or allowed. Should anything be sent to a sister by her relatives or others, let the Abbess give it to the sister. If she needs it, the sister may use it; otherwise, let her in all charity give it to a sister who does need it. If, however, money is sent to her, the Abbess, with the advice of the discreet, may provide for the needs of the sister. Concerning the sick sisters, let the Abbess be strictly bound to inquire diligently, by herself and through other sisters, what their illness requires both by way of counsel as well as food and other necessities. Let her provide for them charitably and kindly according to the resources of the place. [Let this be done] because all are bound to serve and provide for their sisters who are ill just as they would wish to be served themselves if they were suffering from any illness. Let each one confidently manifest her needs to the other. For if a mother loves and nourishes her child according to the flesh, should not a sister love and nourish her sister according to the Spirit even more lovingly? Those who are ill may lay on sacks filled with straw and may use feather pillows for their heads; those who need woolen stockings and quilts may use them. When the sick sisters are visited by those who enter the monastery, they may answer them with brevity, each responding with some good words to those who speak to them. But the other sisters who have permission [to speak] may not dare to speak to those who enter the monastery unless in the presence and hearing of the two sister discreet, assigned by the Abbess or her Vicaress. Let

<p>the Abbess and her Vicaress, as well, be bound to observe this manner of speaking.</p>	
<p><b>CHAPTER NINE</b></p> <p><b>THE PENANCE TO BE IMPOSED ON THE SISTERS WHO SIN;THE SISTERS WHO SERVE OUTSIDE THE MONASTERY</b></p> <p>39. There is no mention of chapter of faults in Clare’s rule. However in Clare’s rule, there is mentioned what to do to sisters who sin and there are instructions on behavior for sisters towards those sisters who sin. If any sister, at the instigation of the enemy, has sinned mortally against the form of our profession, and, if after having been admonished two or three times by the Abbess or other sisters, she does not amend, let her eat bread and water on the floor before all the sisters in the refectory for as many days as she shall have been obstinate. If it seems advisable to the Abbess, let her be subjected to even greater punishment. Meanwhile, as long as she remains obstinate, let the prayer be that the Lord will enlighten her heart to do penance. The Abbess and her sisters, however, should beware not to become angry or disturbed on account of anyone's sin, for anger and disturbance prevent charity in oneself and in others. If it should happen--may it never be so--that an occasion of trouble or scandal should arise between sister and sister through a word or gesture, let she who was the cause of the trouble, before offering her gift of prayer to the Lord, not only prostrate herself humbly at once at the feet of the other and ask pardon, but also beg her simply to intercede for her to the Lord that He might forgive her. Let the other sister, mindful of that word of the Lord--"If you</p>	<p><b>(11) Chapter of Faults and Faithfulness to Vocation</b></p> <p>39. The abbess shall hold a chapter twice or at least once a week for the correction, admonition and regulation of the sisters. For correction and admonition of sisters, see point 40 of Clare’s rule below . There is much that is mentioned about admonition.</p> <p>(In this matter, we absolutely forbid any visitator or minister to make, on his own authority any Constitutions in the aforementioned Monastery beyond its form of life and Rule, which would oblige the sisters under sin or penalty, without the consent and will of all the sisters. If anyone should perhaps do so, they are in no way bound to observe them. We wish and earnestly warn that they shall not command them anything or that anything be commanded, without great usefulness and very evident and manifest necessity. )</p> <p>Above in brackets are not mentioned in Clare’s Rule.</p> <p>There is no mention of conduct for externs for Urbanite Rule.</p>

<p>do not forgive from the heart, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you" (Matthew 6:15;18:35)--generously pardon her sister every wrong she has done her. Let the sisters who serve outside the monastery not linger outside unless some manifest necessity requires it. Let them conduct themselves virtuously and say little, so that those who see them may always be edified. Let them strictly beware of having suspicious meetings and dealings with others. They may not be godmothers of men or women lest gossip or trouble arise because of this. Let them not presume to repeat the gossip of the world inside the monastery. Let them be strictly bound not to repeat outside the monastery anything that was said or done within which could cause scandal. If anyone should innocently offend in these two matters, let it be left to the prudence of the Abbess to mercifully impose a penance on her. But if a sister does this through a vicious habit, let the Abbess, with the advice of her discreets, impose a penance on her according to the nature of the fault.</p>	
<p><b>40. CHAPTER TEN</b></p> <p><b>THE ADMONITION AND CORRECTION OF THE SISTERS</b></p> <p>Let the Abbess admonish and visit her sisters, and humbly and charitably correct them, not commanding them anything that is against their soul and the form of our profession. Let the sisters, however, who are subjects, remember that they have renounced their wills for God's sake. Let them, therefore, be firmly bound to obey their Abbess in all the things they have promised the Lord to observe and which are not against their soul and our</p>	<p>40. There is mention of admonition and correction but not much is said. See Point 39 above.</p>

<p>profession. Let the Abbess, on her part, be so familiar with them that they can speak and act with her as ladies do with their servant. For this is the way it should be: the Abbess should be the servant of all the sisters. In fact, I admonish and exhort the sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ to beware of all pride, vainglory, envy, avarice, care and anxiety about this world, detraction and murmuring, dissension and division. Let them be always eager to preserve among themselves the unity of mutual love which is the bond of perfection. Let those who do not know how to read not be eager to learn. Let them rather devote themselves to what they should desire to have above all else: the Spirit of the Lord and His holy manner of working, to pray always to Him with a pure heart, and to have humility, patience in difficulty and infirmity, and to love those who persecute, blame, and accuse us, for the Lord says: Blessed are those who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, for theirs' is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10). But whoever perseveres to the end will be saved (Matthew 10:22).</p> <p><b>CHAPTER ELEVEN</b></p> <p><b>THE CUSTODY OF THE ENCLOSURE</b></p> <p>41. Let the portress be mature in her manner of acting, discerning, and of a suitable age. Let her remain in an open cell without a door during the day. Let a suitable companion be assigned to her who may take her place in everything whenever necessary.</p>	<p>41. No mention of a portress but of a door keeper</p>
<p>42. Let the door be well secured by two different iron locks, with bars and bolts, so</p>	<p>From (5) Silence, Recollection, Enclosure</p> <p>42. Question is grille and the door – does it refer to the same door? See point 31</p>

<p>that, especially at night, it may be locked with two keys, one of which the portress may have, the other the Abbess. Let it never be left without a guard and securely locked with one key. Let them most diligently take care to see that the door is never left open, except when this can hardly be conveniently avoided.</p> <p>43. Let it never be opened to anyone who wishes to enter, except to those who have been given permission by the Supreme Pontiff or our Lord Cardinal.</p> <p>The Rule of Urban gives special permission to the King of France and mentions the minister general of the OFM.</p> <p>44. The sisters may not allow anyone to enter the monastery before sunrise or to remain within after sunset, unless a manifest, reasonable, and unavoidable cause demands otherwise. If a bishop has permission to offer Mass within the enclosure, either for the blessing of an Abbess or for the consecration of one of</p>	<p>and 32 above. No mention of a guard.</p> <p>43. For the rest, we strictly command in virtue of obedience that no abbess at all or anyone of her sisters may allow any religious or secular person of whatever dignity to enter within the monastery or enclosure, that is, into any place to which the sisters have access, without special permission of the Apostolic See. And in the same way we forbid entry to all others, except the king of France, in whose kingdom this monastery is founded, with some companions to him, up to as many as ten, and the minister general of the Order of Friars Minor with two honest companions, and whose whom evident necessity demands that they enter to do any necessary work, by order of the abbess with the counsel and consent of the sister discreet; and, if they are many, several shall be employed at the task so that, when the work is finished, they leave without the delay, in order that in all things the good name be observed. In this the consent of the minister provincial is required when it can be conveniently done.</p> <p>44. But if a bishop is sometimes granted permission to enter so as to celebrate Mass within, for the blessing of an abbess or for consecrating some sister as a nun, or for another cause, he shall be content with three or four companions or ministers.</p>
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<p>the sisters as a nun or for any other reason, let him be satisfied with both as few and virtuous companions and assistants as possible.</p>	
<p>45. Whenever it is necessary for other men to enter the monastery to do some work, let the Abbess carefully post a suitable person at the door, who may only open it to those assigned for work and to no one else. Let the sisters be extremely careful at such times not to be seen by those who enter.</p> <p>46. About silence, refer to point 30 above. Clare’s rule does not have much about who one could speak to. Urban rule stresses much on which type of men, sisters can talk to.</p> <p>47. No mention</p>	<p>45.</p> <p>46. When someone enters within the enclosure, the abbess may speak with him, always with two of the more discreet and mature sisters of the community. If some woman is allowed to enter the monastery, the sisters may speak with her with the abbess’s permission. Let the sisters be very diligent lest anyone should speak knowingly to any man who has entered, except in the manner noted above. They can sometimes speak with discreet and mature men, and with their honest confessors, or also with others, at appropriate places and times, for their own consolation and edification, with the permission of the minister general or provincial or the abbess, and if this occurs within the monastery, in the sight or presence of three sisters or two. In order that the sisters may be able to dedicate themselves to the divine praises more peacefully and freely, and more rightly attend to their own affairs, we attach a sentence against all who knowingly presume to enter any monastery of this religion, contrary to the aforesaid norm.</p> <p>47. Precaution shall especially be taken that those to whom permission is sometimes granted to enter the</p>



<p>51. See point 50 above</p>	<p>mutual charity. And when he has entered the cloister of the monastery on visitation, he shall bring two suitable religious companions; and these same companions shall never separate from one another while they are within the enclosure. (see point 48 above )</p> <p>51. All monasteries of this order shall be visited each year, and at least once every two years. The Visitor shall always be of the order of the Friars Minor, and shall be sent by the minister general of the Order. Every year in which visitation cannot be held by a visitor send by the general, the monasteries shall, if necessary, be visited by the minister of the respective province, according to the form of visitation of this present Rule.</p>
<p>See point 44 above which mentions about sunrise and sunset. Point 33 is about talking at the grille.</p>	<p>The visitor undertaking the visitation, having first read the Rule shall investigate with much care, under obedience, the truth concerning the state of the sisters and the observance of their religion, by all in general and especially individually. Where he finds anything to be corrected or reformed, motivated by zeal of charity and love of justice, he shall correct and reform with discretion, both in the head as well as in the members. When any sister is visited, she shall remain outside the chapter. Likewise the abbess, handing up the seal, when not present at personal visitation. Absolutely nothing shall be voiced against these in public which cannot be proved as having occurred or proved by public form. But let the sisters be watchful and let them consider carefully, especially in the visitation of the sisters, that they be moved to speak solely from divine love and the correction of their sisters. If they wish to defend themselves, a hearing shall not be denied</p>

	<p>to those who refuse to admit the fault imputed to them, especially if the faults are grave. Those who make grave accusations and fail to prove these, shall be legitimately punished according to the manner of the imputed fault. An abuse which has been sufficiently corrected by the visitor shall in no way be corrected again. The visitor shall observe the above-said manner of speaking, namely when he speaks to all or at least two, in the sight of several nearby, unless outside the enclosure of the monastery and in the parlor with one alone or with several, he wishes to speak of those things which are known to pertain to his office. We absolutely wish that visitors carry out what concerns visitation and without being a burden to the house, so that, the visitation is fully ended within four or five days, unless clear necessity demands more. Nor has he the faculty of entering the monastery afterwards. Without special permission of the minister general, the afore-mentioned time of visitation may not be prorogued for any reason; and we do not wish the minister general to change the afore-mentioned time, unless for some certain reason. Under obedience we strictly forbid visitors and all others no matter how authorized that they shall in no way be permitted to enter and remain in the monastery from sundown to sunrise , except for the confession of a very sick sister or some other clear and imminent danger. Additionally we wish and very much warn the sisters that, publicly and privately, they recommend to the Visitor, as seems best, those things which should be decided and corrected according to the form and regular observance of their life; they are obliged by obedience to firmly obey him in those</p>
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	<p>matters pertaining to his office, within the afore-mentioned time. Whoever acts otherwise shall be duly punished by the visitator according as is fitting. If her defects or deserts demand it, he shall release the abbess from office. Similarly the chaplain and the lay sisters, and also other servants, shall be corrected if they have been found blameworthy in anything. If they refuse or despise amendment, they shall be removed from the monastery. Their confessors and companions, staying there, who administer the Eucharist and other sacraments to them, shall be of the Order of friars minor; unless perhaps in some place the minister general or provincial has otherwise ordained for a reasonable and just cause. Against whom, if the visitator should find anything noteworthy is obliged to notify the minister of the province about it, and he shall immediately correct them or even remove them from the place. We strictly enjoin on the visitator that matters which he has discovered under secrecy in his visitation, shall in no way be knowingly revealed; but, having read out the abuses and imposed penances, he shall burn all writings before the community, unless they are such that by advise of the sister discreets of the community, they should be absolutely reported to the minister general. But if the minister provincial discovers anything noteworthy against the visitator or his companions after visitation, he is obliged to notify this to the minister general. The companions of visitators shall not be present at visitations.</p>
<p>52. We ask as a favor of the same Order a chaplain and a clerical companion of good reputation, of prudent discernment and</p>	<p>52. Not mentioned that chaplain must be from OFM.</p>

<p>two lay brothers, lovers of a holy and upright way of life, in support of our poverty, as we have always mercifully had from the aforesaid Order of Friars Minor, in light of the love of God and our Blessed Francis.</p> <p>53. Let the chaplain not be permitted to enter the monastery without a companion. When they enter, let them remain in an open place, in such a way that they can always see each other and be seen by others.</p>	<p>53.</p>
<p>54. They may enter the enclosure for the confession of the sick who cannot go to the parlor, for their Communion,</p> <p>55. for the Last Anointing and the Prayers of the Dying. Suitable and sufficient outsiders may enter, moreover, according to the prudence of the Abbess, for funeral services and on the solemnity of Masses for the Dead, for digging or opening a grave, or also for making arrangements for</p>	<p><b>(6) Chaplain of the Monastery</b></p> <p>54. When, therefore, any sister is afflicted by grave bodily illness, so that she cannot easily come to the parlor, and needs to confess and receive the Body of the Lord and other sacraments of the Church, their confessor shall enter wearing priestly vestments apart from the chasuble, and his companion shall go in likewise always wearing an alb; and then the infirm sister shall confess, while not far off there are three sisters who see the confessor and the penitent and who can likewise be seen by them. Having heard the confession or administered another sacrament, they shall go out dressed as they came in. Nor shall they dare to make delay, or speak to any other sister, unless in the way prescribed. They shall conduct themselves in this way at the commendation of the soul of the sisters.</p> <p>55. In carrying out the burial rites of sisters or others, two or three priest friars minor may enter in priestly vestments when the body is being carried out for burial; doing what the office requires, they shall always stay together</p>

<p>it.</p>	<p>while there, and depart immediately once the task is over. But if it is necessary that some enter to dig or open a grave or to arrange the earth afterwards, and the abbess and community consider this appropriate because of the physical weakness of the sisters, it shall be lawful for the chaplain and his companion to enter, with some two other people, honest and suitable for the work; these shall remain together while there, and leave without delay once the work is completed.</p>
<p>56. Let the sisters be strictly bound to always have that Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, who has been delegated by the Lord Pope for the Friars Minor, as Governor, Protector, and Corrector, that always submissive and subject at the feet of that holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic faith, we may always observe the poverty and humility of our Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and the Holy Gospel we have firmly promised. Amen.</p>	<p>56. no mention</p> <p>57. Let the master take diligent care, and whoever is visitator at the time, and those who must enter the monastery for work, if such works are necessary, and when or how these workmen enter, and how they should act inside; and let them order and dispose concerning these matters as they consider expedient for the welfare and good repute of the sisters.</p> <p><b>(7) Vigilance at the door</b></p> <p>For the custody of the door one of the sisters shall be appointed who wholly loves God, let her be diligent and discreet,</p>

	<p>and mature in conduct and age. She shall so dispose, strongly guard the key of the aforesaid door and keep it so that the doorway can never be opened without her, or unknown to her. The abbess shall keep the other key distinct from it. Another equally suitable companion shall be also assigned to her, who will take her place in all things when she is engaged because of a reasonable and necessary cause. These door-keepers shall take the greatest care and see that the door is never left open, unless for the least required time. The door shall be carefully protected with iron locks, with the little door and bolts, and the vigilance shall never be relaxed without any of these. Firmly locked day and night; it shall not be opened immediately to all who call, unless the door-keeper first looks through the little window which should be in the door and knows for certain who the caller is, that it is a person to whom one should open without any doubt, in accordance with the form given above about entrance. We absolutely wish that the door be set high, to which one climbs by a wooden ladder which is raised by an iron chain in the evening and secured with a key, and in the morning at daylight it shall be lowered in the presence of three sisters. But we allow them to have lower door through which heavy loads may be brought in, such as jars of wine and the like, using locks and keys with great care. If at times some work has to be done within the monastery, for which some seculars or any persons at all must enter, let the abbess provide carefully; and, while the work is being done, let three sisters or externs from the more mature and discreet sisters of the community be appointed to guard the door, who open</p>
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	<p>to such appointed workers always in silence, and in no way allow other people to enter. Where there is too great a crowd and great commotion, others besides the enclosed sisters shall be appointed on guard.</p> <p><b>(10) Good and Seal of the Monastery</b></p> <p>The minister and visitor, however, should always reform abuses and correct what needs correction, in temporal and spiritual matters. In this matter, to avoid inopportune going under the pretext of temporal needs, and so that the aforesaid sisters may more peacefully serve the Lord, it is lawful for them to receive incomes and possessions in common and freely retain them. In order to duly administer these possessions, there shall be one prudent and faithful procurator in this said monastery, who should be appointed by the abbess, with the advise and consent of the community, and also removed whenever it seem fit to them. He shall be obliged to give an account to the abbess and to other certain sisters on behalf of the community, and also to the visitor when he wishes to hear it, of all matters entrusted to him, both receipts and expenses, And he may in no way sell, mortgage, commute or alienate anything of the immovable things of the monastery. We decree as null and void anything attempted against this. Since therefore the external dwelling of the sisters of this religion is elsewhere, we wish that they avoid in every way over-niceness which is hateful to God in all things and very hateful and contrary to piety and an excess of superfluity in buildings. The seal of the community shall be kept and conserved according to the ordinance of that convent. Every letter,</p>
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	<p>written on behalf of the community, shall first be read in chapter. No sister may send or receive letters unless she first reads them to the abbess, or unless read by someone appointed for this in the presence of the abbess.</p> <p><b>(12) Plenary Indulgence</b></p> <p>We therefore decree that no ecclesiastical or secular person may break or in any way change the present Rule approved and corrected by us.</p> <p>Given at Civitavecchia, 27th July , the second year of our pontificate.</p>
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## FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

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by Valentin Breton, O.F.M.

### INTRODUCTION

When we come to the chapter on Franciscan spirituality in a book like this, we are impressed by its lack of originality. This absence of a distinctive spirituality seems a sign of inferiority and we ask ourselves whether this is a consequence of a devotion to poverty which is said to be the virtue which is the true fountain for the Franciscan soul? Furthermore this spirituality offers no visible principles which are peculiarly its own, no practices which it does not share with other schools.

The devotion, dare we say, the apparently .sentimental devotion that the Order professes for the sacred humanity of the Son of God, the Passion, the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Virgin, is part of Christian piety. Its distinctively Franciscan character is slight. All devout souls consider it a privilege to take part.

No one denies that the Franciscan founder, Francis of Assisi, is a saint whose personality is forceful and original. Yet we cannot claim that it is his imitation of Christ that makes him unique. The very name that Christians bear shows quite clearly their dependence on Christ.

Were Saint Francis' disciples all to profess, in imitation of a few whom

the Church has canonized, his marked cult of poverty, or his lyric love for creatures, or even his literal interpretation of the Gospel--because all cannot be required to go as far as the stigmata--their profession would not make them different from other Christians.

Followers of Francis seem to use the same books, to practice the same devotions, to cultivate the same virtues and (to speak for a moment in a lighter vein) they commit the same faults as do devout souls who are known to have other spiritual connections!

That some men more frequently make the Way of the Cross, while others are fond of reciting the rosary, or conform themselves to a certain method of particular examen--preferences like these do not constitute a notable, nor even an essential distinction of spiritual ways.

And so it goes. The impression persists: Franciscan spirituality is without differentiating characteristics. It is, not to press the point further, among the other more distinctively different schools of spirituality, a Christian spirituality.

Good. Let no one expect us to attempt to refute, not even to discuss, a statement which is so categorically in accord with our convictions: we forthrightly affirm our belief without any ambiguity:

The spirituality adopted by the Franciscan family:

- I. according to the example and teaching of its head,
- II. according to the principles formulated by its doctors,
- III. is purely Christian.

By that we mean that it conforms to the doctrine of the Gospels without any addition of heterogeneous elements or the subtraction of any revealed elements.

Therefore we must demonstrate and prove, first, that this spirituality is derived from the examples and teaching of Saint Francis; then, that it puts into practice the principal doctrines developed by the Order's theologians; finally, that the practices, which are inevitably the same as those found in other schools, are animated with a spirit that may not make any basic changes but, at least to speak with greater exactness, does give them new life.

Then it will be possible for us to conclude that its absolute fidelity to

Revelation, certified in its origins, its systematic elaboration, its strict observance constitute an exceptional differentiation which, while hidden from human eyes, is thereby no less real and characteristic. Because, for a spirituality that wishes and must be Christian, to be Christian purely and solely is no disadvantage.

## **I. EXAMPLES AND TEACHING OF SAINT FRANCIS**

Everyone agrees that Saint Francis understood his personal vocation to be a call to the exact imitation of Jesus Christ. Then he realized that his mission was to spread his own ideal among men. This, too, no one challenges. "Imitate me as I have imitated Christ". "Imitatores mei estote et sicut ego Christi." These words of the Apostle Saint Paul can serve as an epitaph for the life and work of Saint Francis. In the first days of his conversion, he may have interpreted in a material way the order given him by the Crucified Christ of Saint Damian to repair His ruined house. The arrival of many disciples, then the realization of the needs of souls quickly clarified his true purpose and showed him the spiritual ruins which in God's providence he was meant to restore.

Others were as ignorant of Jesus Christ as had been Francis. In that day Christians who were faithful to the Church professed a formal religion without a soul. To them Christ was a name that recalled the memory of a benefactor of times long past who in distant ages had ascended to a far away heaven. Other men, some baptized, some not, repulsed by this cold and lifeless doctrine, sought among non-believers the spiritual up-lift and satisfaction of soul, that the misunderstood official worship no longer afforded.

When Francis returned to Christ he discovered a new meaning in his life. This same return also gave a meaning to the life of men and women who were wandering like a flock more in need of shepherds than of pastures. He could not fail to see that his personal vocation and his providential mission were identical, and that the means that brought about one would also bring about the other.

"Christ is living. He loves us. Let us believe in Him. Let us attach ourselves to Him and from Him receive Life. Let us imitate Him and we will find that we are transformed into Him. Therefore let us observe His Gospel to the letter and without any additions. This is the Way, the Truth and the Life."

Do not think that this is mere conjecture. It is based on many formal documents.

As early as 1209, the first Rule presented to Pope Innocent III opens with these words: "This is the Brothers' (the word "Minor" was not yet used) rule of life: to live in obedience, in chastity, without anything of their own and to follow the doctrine and footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ". The whole spirit of this first Rule is the imitation of our Savior and is based on His words and example. Chapter 23 which is a prayer of praise and thanksgiving shows with inspired precision the motive of this "following of Jesus Christ". We will return to this text in a moment.

The Rule that Pope Honorius III approved in 1223 was more juridical and concise than the earlier edition of 1209, yet it defines the Brothers' rule of life in the same way. This time it refers to them as BROTHERS MINOR, that is to say, lesser or lessened. Their rule of life "consists in the observance of the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, living in obedience, without anything of their own, and in chastity". In this connection it is interesting to notice that the imitation of our Lord, which was a corollary of the practice of the evangelical virtues has become the foundation of Franciscan life and that these three virtues have become the means towards this imitation.

Let us quote once again from the letter that Francis sent in 1226 to the brothers assembled in general chapter when he was too sick to go to them himself. It closes with a singularly luminous and explicit prayer which is a perfect epitome of his spiritual way and if we dare to use the word, of his theology. In it imitation is central. Here is the prayer:

"O God, Thou who art all-powerful, eternal, just and merciful to poor miserable creatures, grant that because of Thyself, Thou wilt do what we know Thou dost desire and desire what is pleasing to Thee, so that purified without and enlightened within, and enkindled with the fire of the Holy Spirit, we may FOLLOW IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THY SON, JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD, and by Thy grace alone we may come to Thee, O most high, who in perfect Trinity and most simple Unity livest, and reignest, and glorify Thee, all-powerful God, forever and ever. Amen."

Now the Rule of the Brothers Minor is the model Francis followed literally when he first regulated the manner of life for the Poor Clares and later with suitable modifications for the Penitents.

Besides the Rule which he gave to Saint Clare we have a short letter to her which he dictated a few days before his blessed death. And if similar documents are missing for the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, this is but a textual gap for which the Father's authentic letters addressed to "All

the faithful, the heads of peoples, priests and clerics," legitimately supply. For the sake of brevity, we will not multiply quotations but everywhere and always Francis proclaims the same doctrine of the need to return to the Gospel and to the Master of the Gospel, the Lord Jesus.. .

Nor has he left us in ignorance as to why he has acted in this way. And on this point in particular, he who used to call himself "a little unlettered man" reveals himself to be a sublime theologian, a descendant of Paul and John.

As proof of this assertion we can first offer the Saint's ADMONITIONS which are placed at the head of the oldest collections of his writings because of their relative length and richness of content.

This work is entitled: "Concerning the Body of Christ" and it is, in fact, a study of the holy Eucharist. It is, also, a glowing and luminous demonstration of the necessity of the mediation of the Man-God, and it shows how communion with His Body makes it possible for us to share in His Spirit, and this in turn enables us to draw near to the Triune-God and makes us pleasing to Him.

A systematic analysis of the doctrine of this beautiful text may be expressed in these propositions.

Because Jesus is all: the Way, the Truth and the Life, the Beginning and the End, no one can please or serve God, except through Him. And God reveals Himself and gives Himself only in Him and through Him. In fact God is Himself invisible unknowable, inaccessible to the creature. Therefore the creature in order to know, love and serve God, needs a Mediator, One who is equal to God and men, the Man-God, Jesus-Christ.

However, it is not enough to become attached to His humanity; beyond that humanity we must through the spirit reach the divinity which belongs to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The apostles, too, were bound by this law, they who saw Jesus in His flesh. All the more reason for it to bind us. And from this fact may be formulated the principles of our spiritual life.

According to Saint Francis, this life consists in our identifying ourselves with Jesus Christ, whom the Church presents to us, whom the Holy Ghost accredits in us, so that, by faith and obedience, we may live and act to the glory of the blessed Trinity.

Now this identification is brought about not only through the efforts of the faithful soul that tries to conform itself to its divine model by exterior imitation, it is also realized from within in a manner that is apparently figurative and obscure but which is true and efficacious: this is the fruit of sacramental communion.

Saint Francis concludes this Admonition with these words:

It is the Lord's Spirit who dwells in Christ's faithful ones, who receive the Body and Blood that are divine. In this way the Lord remains always with them according to His promise: Behold I am with you all days even unto the end of time.

Who is not enlightened and convinced by the mere statement of this doctrine? Its profundity testifies to its truth. We must remember that it is not painstakingly fashioned by a trained theologian, skilled in philosophical speculation and exegetical discussions. It comes from the heart of a little poor man who attended no school but the school of prayer, who knew no master but the Crucifix.

Francis ascended still higher, tracing the path which the doctors of his order were to follow, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and their disciples, enlightening their genius with the brilliance of his own, like the eagle who tempts her little ones to fly and lifts them with the power of her wings.

We will quote one brilliant text. It is to be found in the "Elevations" which form chapter 23 of the Rule of 1209-1221. In a few words it expresses the saint's whole thought on the unique and necessary role of the Man-God.

This chapter is entitled, as we said before:

### **PRAYER, PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING**

It opens with the solemn words: "All powerful, most high, most holy and sovereign God, Father holy and just, Lord of heaven and earth, because of Thy sake we give Thee thanks..."

Then follows a list of the divine works which merit our praise, blessing, and gratitude. Here we must notice the place given to the unique and necessary Mediator, Jesus Christ:

"because according to Thy holy will, Thou hast created all things spiritual and corporal through Thy only Son and in the Holy Spirit; Thou hast made us

to Thy image and likeness, Thou hast placed us in paradise; and through our own fault we have failed..."

"... and as Thou created us through Thy Son, because of Thy true and holy love for us Thou hast ordained that Thy Son, true God and true man, be born of the glorious and ever blessed virgin Mary and that He redeem us from our captivity by His cross, His blood and His death..."

The resemblance is evident between these statements and the sublime prologue of Saint Paul's epistle to the Ephesians: "In Christo Jesu." For it is in and through Christ, the Mediator that predestination, adoption, creation, and redemption of the elect attain their perfection in Christ, the goal of all God's loving designs and the highest point of the Apostle's thought.

In this way Francis goes beyond human wisdom. He reaches the summit of his theology with these words:

And because we are all poor sinners, we are not worthy to pronounce Thy name, therefore we pray Thee to deign to be pleased that our Lord, Jesus Christ, in whom alone Thou art well pleased, render Thee thanks for all things, together with the Holy Spirit, the Consoler. May He be pleasing to Thee and to them, because THIS SON SUFFICES ALWAYS AND FOR ALL THINGS TO THEE, and it is through Him that Thou hast granted us all graces. Alleluia!"

His Christ suffices always and in all things to God! He alone is the object of the Father's good pleasure. No one pleases the Father except in Him and through Him.

This is, for Francis, the supreme reason for His devotion to Christ and his efforts to be conformed to Him!

## **II. THE DOCTRINE FORMULATED BY THE MASTERS OF THE ORDER**

The place assigned by the Triune-God to Jesus Christ in His work and consequently in the destiny of men, as Francis has conceived it perhaps by a pleasing intuition and one that is surely charismatic, has been treated more systematically by the thinkers of his Order. They have shown its importance and its consequences. They have applied to it all the findings of revelation and the traditional scholastic techniques. Their meditations are the basis of what we call today Franciscan spirituality.

The spirit of Saint Francis is recognizable in the speculations of the

theologians of his Order, as well as in the works of its saints. We will name only the greatest and the most renowned, because here we are not interested in presenting quotations but in studying principles and practices in the growth of a living thought. The names of these men are well-known, even if their writings are not read as they should be: Saint Bonaventure and Blessed John Duns Scotus.

Besides his "Commentaries on Sacred Scripture" and his "Sermons" (those vast storehouses of theological knowledge and popular teaching), Saint Bonaventure has written works of pure spirituality. These are not merely marginal or additional works, but they are in strict dependence and vital application because he felt that all knowledge is vain that is not founded on Christ and does seek to know God in Him in order to love and serve Him. On this point the work (unhappily incomplete) which sums up all his doctrine is the "Collationes in Hexaemeron." This is a synthesis of all human knowledge and it includes spirituality.

According to our present purpose let us point out a basic and definitive work "The Triple Way;" then, "The Itinerary of the Soul to God," a treatise that has been much praised, often imitated, less often understood, because it must be seen that this WAY is Christ; and finally "The Six Wings of the Seraphim," an explanation of the Christian exercise of authority. Among his lesser works we must mention "The Tree of Life," "The Soliloquy," "The Soul's Guidance," etc.

Saint Bonaventure, the seraphic doctor, is deeply penetrated and imbued with the mind of his seraphic Father. Etienne Gilson has said that in reading Saint Bonaventure one receives the impression that it is a Saint Francis who has been raised up--or who has forgotten himself--and who is philosophizing.

The second author who reveals Franciscan thought and therefore its spirituality is John Duns Scotus, honored as blessed in his Order and among Christians in the dioceses of Cologne and Nola.

On every point except the one we are going to discuss, Duns Scotus differs notably from Bonaventure. In early education, in training, in his days at Oxford as student, later as master, he deepened the understanding, which was in his very blood, of the real and the concrete. This affirmation was opposed to the speculative tendencies of continental thinkers. He entered the School just in time to profit from the works of Alexander of Hales, Albert the Great, Bonaventure, Thomas, Roger Bacon and to free the pragmatic teaching of Revelation from secular infiltrations and Islamic accretions. Thus he joined his predecessor, Bonaventure, on the one point

that we mentioned above, namely the interpretation of the function and mission of Jesus Christ given by their Father Francis.

Too easily is it forgotten. Too willingly and systematically is it ignored that the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady, today a defined dogma, is in Scotist Christology but a corollary of the absolute primacy and universal mediation of Mary's Son, the Man Christ Jesus, "Homo Christus Jesus."

The second of the great Franciscan masters has produced no notable or well-known treatise on spirituality but he has systematized the absolute primacy on which Franciscan spirituality is founded. And he has given so many suggestions and produced so many texts that his disciples and his commentators can be guided by him.

To Saint Bonaventure and to John Duns Scotus, as to their Father Saint Francis, Christ is the highest grace God offers His creatures. Their response to this offer controls their attitude to God and this includes their religion, their "mystique," their spirituality.

Under these conditions, what place in human thought and act is it appropriate to give to Christ Jesus?

The same, these Franciscans answer, that He holds in the thought and the work of God.

They claim, therefore, that according to Scripture, in Him, who as man is called Jesus Christ, we must acknowledge the first being conceived, the first being willed by the Triune-God in their resolve to manifest "ad extra," that is outside of the intimacy of their Persons, their Power, their Wisdom, their Goodness.

Christ is the first predestined being, the first being allowed to share in the life and happiness of God. And this without any other motive than the divine free will, through a personal union with the Son.

In the communication of His blessed fullness to a uniquely, privileged being, God finds not only an adequate manifestation of Himself, but also in the adoration, love and service of this privileged being, an adequate return of His gift. Christ's response to these advances of the Triune-God satisfy, as a matter of equality, the plan of love that decided God to abandon His blessed solitude. God could have stopped there. His work was perfect. This assertion is capital in the Franciscan mystique. It must not be forgotten.

God went still further. He pushed, as it were to excess, the communication of His life, of His activity, of His happiness. With His First-born He associated companions, brothers, but this communication is as it were an overflow of benevolence which has been previously rewarded, repaid, balanced by the absolute value of the homage paid the Triune-God by His Christ, the Man-God, in return for His first gift. No ingratitude, were any to appear among the beneficiaries of His overflowing gift, could count because of the return Christ has already made.

Now it is because of Jesus Christ, at His request, to His credit and according to His plan that in Him, for Him and through Him all creatures in their turn receive their being. Of all these creatures in heaven and on earth, organic, inert, voiceless, intelligent, free, Christ is the principle of their creation.

So true is it that Christ depends on no creature, that on the contrary without Christ no creature would exist.

He is also and primarily the cause of the predestination of free creatures--angels and men. These moral and spiritual creatures are from the beginning established in the order of charity, that is to say they are predestined to share in the personal life of the Triune-God. In Christ they are called to glory. Because of this glory, graces are prepared and offered to them which will make them capable and worthy to receive it. These graces were merited for them by Christ. For this reason they are created in a nature adapted to this grace and to this glory.

Let us study the order, or, if we prefer, the hierarchy of the manifestations of divine charity, of the God who is Love.

Eternally, essential Love subsists in a trinity of Persons The going out of the Son, willed absolutely for its own sake, is the Incarnation and gave God "One who loved Him". Further manifestations are:

- 1.--the adoption of spirits, the ordering of grace to glory, of nature to grace; predestination; the Incarnate Son is the first-born of many brethren;
- 2.--the creation of beings according to their nature, decreed and accomplished to realize the gift already decided upon; the Son Incarnate is the model (the archetype) and the artisan of creation;
- 3.--the revelation to free beings of God's plan: the Son Incarnate is the image and spokesman of the Father.

From the essential function of the Incarnate Son, Christ Jesus, results the necessity and efficacy of His mediation. He is the only mediator between God and men. Because all depends on Him, all comes from Him, passes through Him from God to other beings, in existence, in action, in knowledge, merit and reward, so all returns to God through Him. What has value, has value only in Him. God knows, wills, approves only Christ, or in Christ, or because of Christ. Reciprocally no one knows God, loves God or serves Him efficaciously, no one comes to God, no one pleases Him but in Christ and through Him.

Christ, the principle of God's works is the means (medium) of created activity, He is the center of the Universe.

Furthermore whoever lives, thinks, loves, acts, serves in Him can be sure of God's good pleasure; the infinite pleasure taken by the Father and the First-born give value to the works of all His other children. This is the second important affirmation of Franciscan "mystique." It must be remembered.

The all-loving plans of the Triune-God unfold in this manner.

Created later, the free creature (restrictively man) did not maintain the high level of his vocation and fell by sin, both original and actual.

1.--His defection does not destroy all order that is not based on him; it does remove him from this order. Sinner, as he is, he is still, despite his rebellion, subject to Christ, tributary to Christ in his being, in his life, in his end.

2.--And if Christ, in His goodness, is pleased to repair man's fault, He does not need to create a new order, nor to impose it by force, but simply to restore the primitive order which although violated is permanent and to which the repentant guilty creature can return.

3.--Franciscan spirituality represents in this way the mystery of the Redemption with its proper object, distinct from that of the Incarnation and apart from the role of pain, passion, and compassion.

God is not the implacable redresser of his offense, but a loving Father who authorities His eldest Son, His beloved Son to devote Himself to the salvation of His rebel brothers and makes it possible for Him to make this reparation by giving Him a freely-chosen power of suffering, extraordinary and miraculous.

Christ is not the victim of a sanguinary prosecution, which takes delight in torturing One who is innocent in place of those who are guilty. He is a friend who offers Himself spontaneously, out of love for Father and children, to draw His guilty loved ones from the abyss where they have hurled themselves and to ransom them at whatever cost to Himself.

Compassion, in souls who have been redeemed at so high a cost, is less a debt that has been contracted or a payment, but rather a voluntary imitation; and pain that is accepted, even deliberately sought in penance, becomes not so much a disciplinary procedure but is rather a return of love: Christ loved me and delivered Himself up for me!

From this absolute priority of the predestination of Christ Jesus; from His universal primacy over all creatures; from the subordination of all other destinies to His own; from the necessity of His mediation flow consequences that limit, determine and govern all Franciscan spirituality.

I.--God's work is done in unity. It is not made up of disparate and heterogeneous parts. Seemingly this, too, is true of man's total existence.

Because all creatures owe their being to Christ and are ordained to Him as to their end, in their activity and their destiny, the order of the world is Christian. Nothing in the world, nothing that has ever been in the world, nothing that ever will be in the world can be pagan, or apart from God or contrary to God, nor bad in itself, nor even dangerous. The revolt of sinners, the disorder of original or actual sin made right by grace, promised or given, can harm their free and responsible agents since they are for all the others an occasion of common effort, or of merit.

Under the various forms of temporal trial and eternal fulfillment, of activity by the individual, the family or civil and ecclesiastic society, of personal or liturgical piety, of human labor, of scientific or moral culture, man's life remains one and the same.

All in Christ and through Christ are unified and tend to charity, that is God's love for man and man's love for God, man's love of God and of his neighbor man's salvation and God's honor.

II.--Free creatures, angels and men (here we are especially interested in the latter), are established from the beginning in the order we call supernatural. Their "nature", their end, their actions are supernaturalized, whether they know it or not, whether they want it or refuse it. To remain in the truth, in the objective and ontological reality

of their psychology and of their history, we must therefore never forget the secret presence of the internal activity of this element which is not logical but vital. The ascetic and the apostle ought to count on it. He ought always remember that the just man lives "supernaturally", as in his normal state, not through his individual effort but through communication in the life of Christ. The sinner and formal infidel do not live "supernaturally", consequently they are in a state of violence from which the whole power of the divine order tends to withdraw them, just as the law of gravity tends to draw bodies to their center. In the same manner a stone held in an instable position is not withdrawn from the pull of gravity, so the sinner is not excluded from the order he is violating, on the contrary he is being constantly invited to integrate himself in it once again. There is great power in this thought for those who seek to convert souls!

III.--The whole work of the salvation of men is already truly accomplished by Christ, not only in His title of Redeemer which is, so to speak, only accessory, but in His deeper and essential title of Principle of predestination and creation. As a matter of fact each one must do this work for himself, surrendering himself to whatever demands are made by Christ and by his coheirs in this great act of collaboration because, although "salvation is a personal work, it is not individual".

Nevertheless, no one is asked to work for a vague and uncertain result. No: the result is secured and success is certain. Because the efforts made by the faithful soul who works for his salvation, and the functional or ministerial efforts of the apostle who labors for the salvation of his brothers are in reality the works of Christ Himself, so they are bound to attain this end and please God.

IV.--The formula that sums up Franciscan spirituality is this: "I live now not I but Christ lives in me".

The efforts required, the practices proposed, the exercises undertaken, are obviously those recommended in other schools of spirituality. But there is a difference.

1.--Here, efforts and practices, are no longer those of a human activity--even supported by grace--which seeks by these means to win Christ, but the manifestation of an activity which is already informed and animated by the Spirit of Christ, as by an inner movement and control.

2.--They are unified among themselves and identified with the very life of which they are an expression because they are the action of the Head in the members, of the sap in the branches.

3.--Among these different exercises, the liturgy and the sacraments hold a more esteemed position than private practices such as examen and meditation because they are of divine and ecclesiastical institution and their authenticity and efficacy are divinely assured.

V.--Charity gives life to this spirituality when it begins, as it progresses, until its end. Motives of fear and hope are neither disdained or underestimated, but they are kept in a subordinate position, enlivened by faith which provides their objects and by love which widens their horizons.

Christ loved me and delivered Himself up for me, this is the motive of conversion, perseverance and consummation. The dominant motive of charity, truly affecting unity of life, of activity and of fruit between Christ and the faithful soul, not by outward imitation but by an inner transformation is the formal work of the blessed Eucharist. It is known first by faith, is accepted by the will, and realized in every domain, and when the goal is reached it can be consciously verified. This awareness can be considered as the summit of mystical union, the prelude to eternal union where Christ will be all in all in God, according to His promise: "I will manifest myself to him".

VI.--According to the Franciscan "mystique" (in the modern and restricted meaning of the word, that is: "new" relations of "conscious" intimacy with God) the place accorded Christ, the object and means of contemplation according to man's whole being, is fixed according to the same principles.

Since Christ is by nature--can we say, and not by a subsequent and arbitrary will of God--the sole mediator between God and men, no one comes to the Father except through Him and in Him. In return, no one is pleasing to the Father and heard by Him except in Christ and through Christ. Nor does the Father ever hide from anyone who asks for Him in the name of and out of love for His Beloved: whoever the soul may be, the Father welcomes him and answers his prayer.

Taught these truths, the Franciscan soul does not pretend to present himself alone before God, not to know God except through the visible image which He has pleased to give us of Himself. To see the Son is to see the Father.

On the one hand the Franciscan soul does not in his unworthiness place any obstacles to divine favors because his unworthiness is fundamental; to free himself of this unworthiness, would that not be to imply that these favors

can be merited and reduced to something that man can condignly acquire? The Franciscan asks and waits.

On the other hand, the soul will not admit that the holy Humanity can be an obstacle to the knowledge of God: but through the wounds of Jesus crucified, he will try humbly to attain to the contemplation of the Trinity.

This point is also characteristic: the God of the Franciscan soul is indeed the Triune-God, the Father of Jesus Christ, the living God and not the abstract God of philosophers and savants.

VII.--In Franciscan asceticism, therefore, there is no question of introducing the supernatural into one's actions or into one's life, as something that comes from above or from outside. Nor is this done, as it were, by constraint or by force. Our desire is to be clothed, not despoiled, in order that what is mortal in us can be absorbed by life. To do this all that is necessary is:

1.--to admit according to the revealed doctrine that our whole life and all that we do are truly supernaturalized in truth and in fact by a fundamental dependence on Christ and through His life-giving influence;

2.--to realize this doctrine, by making ourselves docile and attentive to Christ's will as it is revealed to us, moment by moment, by the common precepts and the duties of our state, circumstances, inspirations or impulses of the Spirit of Jesus, under the direction of the Church;

3.--to accomplish this will with joy, confidence, submission, generosity; not fearing that this attitude of basic deference to Christ will paralyze initiative; only the sallies of self-love will be mortified and these are always ready to substitute themselves, under the pretext of zeal, for the spirit of Jesus.

### **III. ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES**

Who can fail to see that this spirituality generates joy, optimism, generosity and sacrifice, because it is based on charity, confidence and humility as is amply attested by the life and number of the saints of the Order?

I. How can we explain the attitude of the Franciscan soul?

### 1. Towards God.

Whatever may be the sum total of the creature's resistances and defections, the soul knows that the loving plan of the Trinity is not frustrated. This has been perfectly accomplished and can never be undone. Besides, to give glory to God and to rejoice with Him, the soul need not have recourse to this supposition (a horrible thought if we dwell on it), that hell glorifies God as much as does heaven. For such a soul it is enough to know that Christ has, in advance, given all due adoration, all due service, and that through Christ and in Christ, the soul may worthily adore, love and serve God. The soul may love Him above all things and more than self, without needing to be pleased with a profit from the unhappiness of any creature.

### 2. Towards creatures.

The Franciscan finds all creation good. All creation is his brother. It contains no hidden snares. It lifts him to God. He can trust it, use it, enjoy it with thanksgiving and discretion. "Tamquam non utentes." He uses, as if not using, all the good things that it offers him according to the divine order and plan.

Men, more than all other creatures are dear to us. They are our brothers. Redeemed by Christ, they are coheirs with Christ, God's children by the same title that we are. Fraternal charity is for us a privilege that we ought to enjoy rather than a duty that we must perform with pain. We do not look upon ourselves as enemies, but as ignorant men who are to be drawn to the truth, as wanderers who are to be led back to the way, as dead men to be brought to Life.

This work of life and love is to us more precious and seems more urgent, more easily accomplished and more likely to succeed, because it is Christ's work not our own. Moreover, collaborating with us in this work are all the orders of the world, the activity of spirits, the invitations of grace. And whatever seems to resist us, may do so only because of our ignorance and may in reality be enveloped by the Savior's charity. So we treat, neither Truth nor Life, as if they were our own possessions, nor do we act as if God's glory were our own and could be harmed when we harm ourselves.

### 3. Towards oneself.

The discipline whereby the ascetic controls his faculties and his senses in order that they be docile and faithful to the directives of the spirit of Jesus, is for the Franciscan not a work of violence, repression or

destruction but of growth and perfection. According to other schools of spirituality the old man is enemy number one, he must be hounded until death. To the Franciscan he is a brother in chains who must be freed from his fetters. Nature is a daughter of God and therefore good: all she needs is discipline. Brother Francis himself admitted that "brother ass" had served him well and he reproached himself for treating him so badly on many occasions. So it is our duty to be fully and totally ourselves, that is to say "each one must in his own way be Christ".

The abnegation required of us, as it is of all Christians, consists in substituting for our imperfect thoughts, wills and feelings which are so often centered on a visible good, the perfect thoughts wills and feelings of Christ which are raised to the unseen good above. We write renouncement, we read plenitude. Sorrow is for us not an end in itself but a means of giving proofs of our faith and thanksgiving to Christ who was crucified through love.

II. Fully conscious that alone we can do nothing and that Christ Jesus our head can and wishes to do all in us and with us; conscious, too, that as a matter of fact He has already successfully done all, our joy is immense and our hope unshakable. When we humble ourselves before Him, when we unite ourselves to Him, when we substitute for the imperfection of our ways and our works His plenitude and perfection in the adoration of the Blessed Trinity, the loving service of God and of neighbor, we can repeat with certitude, knowing the full meaning of our words: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me; for what I now do in the weakness of the body, I do through faith in the plenitude of Him who loving me has given Himself to me and for me". "With Christ I am nailed to the cross". "Christo confixus sum cruci." Crucified with Christ, we are happy on the cross through which with Him we reconcile all things to God.

The Franciscan soul is never alone whether he presents himself before God or whether he goes to serve his brethren. He knows that he is always "in Christ Jesus", "in Christo Jesus," guided by the Spirit of Jesus and that he acts according to that guidance.

Through Christ and with Christ, the Franciscan adores, praises, prays. This "elan" towards God is paralyzed neither by unworthiness nor powerlessness, because, although he comes empty-handed and unadorned, he is rich with the graces and merits of his Mediator who is always living to intercede for him with God. Like Christ and with Christ, the Franciscan adores, exalts, pleads and repairs for the Church. Christ is dearer to him than he is to himself.

For Christ and with Christ, he serves. Set-backs have no meaning for him. His works are not his own. His zeal is all the greater because he is personally disinterested. Temporal success is not his goal, either in the conquest of souls or the slower, harder conquest of self, because the Master looks to the effort and gives no creature the glory of achievement. Is it not the Master who acts through and with and in the soul? To Him be all honor because from Him comes the power to will and to act!

III. To complete this synthetic exposition of Franciscan spirituality we must now show the role and the relative importance of devotions that are part of the spiritual life.

1.--The Eucharist, sacrifice and sacrament, is an anticipated realization, at once symbolic, figurative, actual and efficacious of our life in Christ, of Christ's life in us, of our union with God in Christ. The Franciscan knows with the certitude of faith that he already possesses the object of his hope and of his love, so he is not overly concerned about some form of a higher and more or less unverifiable experience of these realities. In spite of this--or perhaps because of this--charismatic prayer has never been lacking among Franciscans.

2.--The Imitation of Christ is for us not one means among many other equally good means. Nor is it even the best means. It is the only and essential means and without it there can be no conformity. This is true because conformity is not a series of exterior acts designed to produce some outer resemblance. It is a vitalizing effort to reproduce in the disciple by interior assimilation the Master's life and ways, just as children resemble their parents. It follows that this identification is the result rather of eucharistic communion than of any personal striving.

3.--The Holy Ghost, as is now transparently evident, cannot even be, for the Franciscan, the object of an excellent devotion. He is in fact the devotion. By this we mean that He is the inner principle of Franciscan spiritual life, the dynamic of Franciscan activity, the author of a living transformation in Christ. As a result the soul, like a child, is freed from the letter that kills. Christ's life, through the power of the Spirit of Christ and the collaboration of our Lady, becomes the soul's life.

4.--Because our Lady is, with her divine Son, the object of the same divine decree, she is His Co-Mediatrix in creation, redemption, distribution of grace and entrance into glory. In Franciscan spirituality her place must be next to Christ, after Him and with Him. She is the Mother of Christ the Head by God's choice and her own consent. She is also the Mother of His members

5.--of the Mystical Body, the living center of the Franciscan soul. This three-fold Church triumphs in the heaven of angels and saints, suffers in purgatory, and struggles on earth where it is visible and invisible, hierarchic and spiritual. From this Church the soul receives doctrine and sacraments, to this Church the soul returns love and obedience.

6.--The reception of the sacraments and liturgical life are neither supplementary nor superfluous, but as we observed when discussing the Eucharist, the Franciscan knows that Mass, public prayers, and sacramental ceremonies are means of union with Christ--peerless, authentic and divinely efficacious because of their institution. They are valued highly but other means

7.--for example, such ascetical exercises as examen or meditation are not for that reason neglected or despised. The latter is not to be confused with prayer because the enlightened Franciscan docile to the Holy Spirit and conformed to the acts and thoughts of Christ (that is to His mysteries and His states) is by nature contemplative and Christ is the object and means of a tender knowledge of God, of a wisdom which is eternal life.

These examples will suffice. They show that the introduction of these devotions does no violence to our theses and adds nothing incongruous. On the contrary, they serve to bring out the integrity and true meaning of Franciscan spirituality. They do not endanger its unity nor obscure its pattern.

IV. We have seen that the practices of virtue of the Franciscan are those of every Christian soul. Yet we allowed ourselves to claim at the beginning of this chapter that these practices which are to be found in every school have here a spirit that if not essentially different, is at least fundamentally new.

This is the spirit of the first beatitude:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Lest this study be incomplete and our readers be deceived, we must now show how the virtue of poverty gives a special modality to Franciscan spirituality, and we must describe the spiritual reality that is hidden in this word.

It is along this path that the Franciscan follows his guide and grasps,

adopts and fulfills his highest purpose more perfectly and more profoundly.

Francis is not merely poor. He is the poor man, the little poor man, "pauperculus, il poverello." How far he carried poverty, renunciation, disappropriation, there is no need to repeat--the facts are well known. His poverty is legendary. Excesses and unjustifiable exaggerations have been imputed to him. There is a proverb "Loans are made only to rich men," and it is true that of the plenitude of Franciscan poverty practices are alleged that verge on the superstitious.

Saint Ambrose, in accord with all the Fathers and Doctors justifies the choice of poverty as the foundation of the spiritual edifice on the grounds that the root of all evil springs from its contraries, cupidity and avarice.

But Francis was not guided by dialectics. He was not influenced by theories of asceticism or social economy. Love was his lodestar. He loved Christ and wanted to make himself in all things like Christ. He saw that Christ taught poverty by word and example. He willed to make himself poor. He exhorted his followers to live in poverty and by poverty.

Rich as Christ was, for our sakes He made Himself poor. "For you He was made poor". "Propter vos egenus factus est." Beyond the state of need to which Jesus reduced Himself during His mortal life, Francis discovered the deep and radical self-stripping of which this external poverty seemed to be the sacrament: "He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." "Semetipsum exinanvit, formam servi accipiens." Francis united himself to the mystery of the annihilations of the Incarnate Word. He considered Christ as stripped of human personality in favor of the person of the Son, not claiming the condition of God to which He had a right, or the condition of a free man which might have been His. He made Himself like the most wretched among us, like slaves without civil rights, like criminals condemned and punished.

"Nudum nudus sequitur." But who is there who will not admire the deep theological insight of this little unlettered man and the likeness to His divine Savior to which it brought him?

According to his Father's example the Franciscan finds in evangelical poverty, most vitally in Jesus Christ poor, the rule of his life, the form of his spirituality.

He lives not only in poverty (to please God, all disciples of His crucified Son must do this), he also lives by poverty, so that this poverty which

according to other schools is only a secondary virtue connected with temperance, becomes for him the means of inner union and transformation in God.

Every school of spirituality manifests some special aspect of the inexhaustible plenitude of Christ's sanctity. It is this that gives it a special "cachet," a center of spiritual unity, a way of holiness. As a matter of fact, the end of every school is charity and the ultimate means is humility through which charity flourishes, because charity is a theological virtue and a gratuitous gift which is neither acquired nor merited. It is God's overflowing gift to the soul He loves, because of His exceeding love. "Propter nimiam charitatem." But in which soul? In the humble soul, emptied of self, stripped of self, in other words in the soul reduced to its essential poverty. Humility makes room for charity, charity fills the soul in the measure of its poverty.

In humility, in the emptying of the old man, as Saint Augustine calls it, Francis saw an aspect--but only one aspect of poverty. Rightly so. Poverty, Saint Ambrose affirms, is more vast than humility. It is also more loving. If it empties man of self, it is for the sake of a more perfect plenitude. Christ, being rich, made Himself poor, to enrich us.

Notice how every virtue can lead to poverty because all virtues suppose or impose some kind of renunciation or disappropriation. Faith surrenders reason's certitudes. Hope gives up earthly cravings. Temperance (and this includes chastity) deprives the body of its pleasures. Let it not be said that these renunciations are made for the sake of a better good, for that is their meaning. Charity, in its turn, strips man of what he has most at heart: his longing, his need to be a center, to make himself the equal of God.

For Francis this is the efficacious value of poverty. It is not to be understood in the use of things, pushed even to the most extreme needs. It requires man's sincere correspondence to his condition as creature.

In Franciscan asceticism, poverty is seen to be a fount, a source of virtue whence all other virtues flow, whether they are exercised towards God and His Christ, towards neighbor or towards self. This is its exacting ideal of a never satisfied love, a Christocentric virtue, the epitome of all theory and all practice. We end where we began. Poverty has gone full circle. Daily practice proves that all can and all must come from Christ, the first Predestined, the universal Mediator, the Cause, the Exemplar, and the End of God's work.

V. Before concluding, let us confirm the efficacy of this doctrine by citing the number of those who, inspired by its lessons, have been acclaimed by the Church for their holiness. These figures speak with an eloquence all their own.

The litany of saints approved for Franciscan use contains the names of 30 martyrs in six different categories, besides Saint Fidelis, as well as 33 confessors and 14 virgins or widows.

It would be beyond the scope of this work to list these servants of God and to add the names of the blessed. Such an enumeration, however, would excite wonder, because it would include men and women of great renown and of widely different social classes. More useful is the observation that a saint recognized by the Church never leads his or her heroic life in isolation. On the contrary such an ardent soul is a center of faith and fervor.

Before the days of the pontificate of His Holiness Pope Pius XII, the Franciscan family gave the Church 121 saints (61 in the First Order, 6 in the Second and 54 in the Third) and 352 blessed (118 in the First Order, 22 in the Second, 92 in the Third). These Tertiaries were monarchs or merchants, working men or women who won their holiness in the world and helped to make the world holy. In the twentieth century, 91 Franciscans have been canonized or beatified. Of these Pius XI canonized five and Pius XII has added new names to the list, let us mention only Saint Jeanne of Valois and two French Franciscans among the 29 martyred by the Boxers in 1900 and who are now blessed.

More than 550 causes have been introduced in Rome. Almost one-third, that is about 180 of these causes are Franciscan. Four of these servants of God are our contemporaries.

By its fruits, our Lord has told us, the tree is to be judged.

## **CONCLUSION**

May we not claim (unless we are completely and blindly deceived) that we have achieved our purpose and have shown that the spirituality adopted by the Franciscan family is:

- 1.--conformed to the examples and teaching of its founder,
- 2.--signally faithful to the doctrines laid down by its teachers and based on revelation,

3.--and that its devotional practices are inevitably the same as those found in other schools, yet their spirit is, if not entirely its own, at least and more correctly basically made new.

To this spirituality no extraneous elements have been added From it no revealed doctrines have been subtracted. It is purely and solely evangelical. In it Christ is all: foundation and crown, door and key, way and goal, truth and life.

So absolute a fidelity to revelation, attested to at its inception in its consistent development in its strict observance, leads to a result that is distinctively and really its own even though hidden from human eyes.

"God forbid", the Franciscan can repeat in the words of the Apostle Paul, in the words of his own father Francis, in the words of his masters,

"God forbid, that I ever glory in aught else than in Jesus, my crucified Lord. To Him be honor, glory, love eternally. Amen."

### An Exercise on the Above Reading:

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1. Please re-read the entire lesson and use a highlighter to mark anything unclear to you.
2. Look up any words or phrases you do not understand, add these to your vocabulary list!
3. Create a list of questions you have concerning the readings. List those things you might not have been able to find in step two and email them to your Mentors.
4. Write a paragraph or two on the *most important things you found in the reading*. Email these to your Mentors.
5. From the list in step 4 please write a three page paper on your thoughts about the singularly most important idea you found in the reading and send it to your Mentors by email.
6. One on one discussion will be scheduled by your Mentors via Skype, be prepared with notes and questions!

### Incarnation in Franciscan Spirituality

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#### **Duns Scotus and the meaning of Love**

**By Seamus Mulholland OFM**

John Duns Scotus (c.1265-1308) is one of the most important thinkers in the history of Christian thought, and an aspect of that thought is crucially relevant to our world

today. More known as a philosopher of great insight and perception, his primary contribution to theology is little known outside the Franciscan order, yet is one of the most dynamically creative moments in the development of Franciscan theology and spirituality.

Though a profound theological and philosophical thinker, Scotus was first and foremost a Franciscan. His doctrine of the Incarnation (more fully known as the Doctrine of the Absolute Primacy of Christ in the Universe) is firmly rooted in the Franciscan intellectual and spiritual tradition, at whose core is the Person of the Incarnate Son as this is experienced in the radical evangelical witness of Francis. At the center of the life of Francis is the Incarnate Crucified Lord of all creation, whom Francis called our 'Elder Brother'; at the center of the life of Scotus is the Incarnate Person of the Son, whom he calls 'God's Masterpiece'. In Scotus, the Incarnation is not a contingency plan when the original creative process of God goes awry because of sin. Scotus rejects this notion as too central an emphasis on Man to the extent that the freedom of God to act in love is determined by an external necessity i.e. the redemption from sin. Scotus understands the Incarnation as always being in the mind of God even before the historical and existential physicality of creation itself and the fact of sin.

The Incarnation is the model for creation: there is a creation only because of the Incarnation. In this schema, the universe is for Christ and not Christ for the universe. Scotus finds it inconceivable that the 'greatest good in the universe' i.e. the Incarnation, can be determined by some lesser good i.e. Man's redemption. This is because such a sin-centered view of the Incarnation suggests that the primary role of Christ is as an assuager of the universe's guilt. In the Absolute Primacy, Christ is the beginning, middle and end of creation. He stands at the center of the universe as the reason for its existence. In this sense the universe has realized its creational potential more than Man, since it is created with the potential to bear the God-Man and the Incarnation has taken place historically and existentially. Man, as yet, has failed to reach his potential to 'love one another as I have loved you'.

Scotus argues that the reason for the Incarnation is Love. The Love of God in himself and the free desire that God has to share that love with another who can love him as perfectly as he loves himself, i.e. the Christ. Scotus says that all the souls that were ever created and about to be created could not, cannot and never will measure up to the supreme love that Christ has for the Trinity. The very fact of the preconception of the Incarnation in Scotus's thought means that we are co-heirs to this Trinitarian love that Christ has. The Incarnation, then in Duns Scotus, becomes the unrepeatable, unique, and single defining act of God's love. God, says Scotus, is what he is: we know that God exists and we know what that existence is: Love. Thus, if Man had not sinned Christ would still have come, since this was predetermined from all eternity in the mind of God as the supreme manifestation of his love for the creation he brings about in his free act. The Incarnation is the effect of God freely choosing to end his self-isolation and show

who and what He is to that creation. The Incarnation, therefore, in Franciscan spirituality is centered on Love and not sin. Sin has been given too much prominence in contemporary soteriology: God redeems from sin because he loves us?: no, says the Scotist, God loves us and then redeems us. Redemption is an act of love first and foremost, not an act of saving us from sin, and the first act of redemption is the Incarnation. God foresees us in union with him before he sees how sin disrupts that relational dynamic between He and us. Scotus makes it clear that the first movement is from God, a revelatory movement wherein God freely chooses to move beyond his own self-loving and share that loving with something other than himself – namely creation, and this process is epitomized in the Incarnation.

What the Incarnation shows us is not primarily the need for redemption, but the need that is in each one of us for love. That love which is so utterly free and unmerited that it embraces our own limitations, our own failures, our own hopes and longings and in uniting itself to us in the Incarnate Word in the person of Jesus of Nazareth elevates the human project to that which it always was in the mind of God. Scotus begins with Love, that love which is the very being of God himself, he travels the road of Love, which is made manifest in the Incarnation, and he ends with love, that love so hard to see in the misery of the abandoned Jesus on the cross, that Love which glorifies the whole creational project in the Resurrection.

Franciscan Spirituality sees the Incarnation as the guarantee of union with God. It is not something to be hoped for or to be looked forward to – it is something, which is happening NOW. God is Love and that Love is our redemption and redemption is not primarily being saved from sin, but is rather the gift of the possibility of openness to the experience of the divine Other in our life. How can it be otherwise when we posit the notion of the divine and human in Jesus? Scotus's doctrine of the absolute centrality of Love is both timely and profoundly needed by our world. Men and women cry out for an experience of hope in a world which has lost direction – in the teaching of Duns Scotus, Franciscan Spirituality has within its hand that hope-filled experience and the end of that longing. For if God willed the Incarnation from all eternity, then it was always his intention to become part of sinful creation – sin determines the manner of that becoming, but it does not determine the fact that it was going to be.

The incarnational thought of Duns Scotus needs a broader hearing, for it is pertinent to all Christians and the world, not just the Catholic tradition. The Incarnation is of God, not Man. Scotus is indeed in the tradition of Francis and his incarnational theology is not complex – it is utterly simple: God is love and all that has been, is and ever will be is because God is love and is among us in Jesus among us in Jesus who is ever present.

### An Exercise on the Above Reading:

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1. Please re-read the entire lesson and use a highlighter to mark anything unclear to you.
2. Look up any words or phrases you do not understand, add these to your vocabulary list!
3. Create a list of questions you have concerning the readings. List those things you might not have been able to find in step two and email them to your Mentors.
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## UNIT FOUR: FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

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This first part of this unit aims to show the essential elements of Franciscan spirituality, the Franciscan charism, and the richness of the Franciscan vocation.

### Part One: Some Basic Concepts

#### Some Introductory Remarks:

**What does “Spirituality” mean?**

**Christian Spirituality**

**What is Franciscan Spirituality?**

### Chapter One: The Franciscan Journey to God

1. **Francis’ Idea of God**
2. **Christ-centred: Living in active imitation of Christ**
  - a) **The Following of Christ (“sequela Christi”)**

**Introduction: Faith – Central to Franciscan Life**
  - b) **The Self-Emptying of Christ (“kenosis”)**

**Symbolic moments:**

    1. **Bethlehem – Greccio**
    2. **Eucharist**

### 3. Calvary

#### Chapter Two: Universal Fatherhood of God & Brotherhood of All Creatures

1. What does the “Fatherhood of God” mean?
2. We are Brothers and Sisters
3. Qualities of Franciscan Sister/Brotherhood
  - a. Nature and Purpose of Sister/Brotherhood
  - b. The Bond of Love
  - c. As an Expression of Obedience
  - d. As an Expression of Poverty
  - e. As an Expression of Chastity
  - f. As an Expression of Life
  - g. As an Expression of Loyalty
  - h. As an Expression of Love of Ecology
  - i. As an Expression of Peace & Non-Violence

#### Chapter Three: St Clare’s Approach to Franciscan Spirituality

##### Main themes:

- Poverty and the Passion of Christ;
- The Primacy of Love;
- The Incarnation and Redemption;
- Mirroring Christ in the World;
- The Life of Prayer

#### Review of Part One of Unit Four

## UNIT FOUR: FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY

### PART ONE: SOME BASIC CONCEPTS

#### Some Introductory Remarks

In this unit, we examine the objective that Francis and Clare aimed at, that is, what it means for us to be a Franciscan, our identity. Here we consider what our Franciscan spirituality is and what the Franciscan charism means. It would be good to discuss our own ideas first before we see more on this topic.

- When you think of St Francis or St Clare, what are the most important qualities that strike you about each of them?
- Discuss these qualities and put them in order of preference as you think St Francis or St Clare would list them.
- What do you think Franciscan Spirituality means?

#### What does “Spirituality” mean?

This may appear to be a theoretical question, but we need to look at it briefly. We use the word “spirituality” very often, but have we ever stopped to ask what it means? Firstly, we must remember that **only persons are able to have spirituality**. It is connected with our spirit or soul. There are many kinds of spirituality. It can be pagan, non-Christian, such as Hinduism, Buddhism or traditional religions that do not know Jesus Christ. In this course, we are only dealing with Christian spirituality.

The word “Spirituality” comes from the word ‘spiritual’ which is described in the Oxford Dictionary<sup>[1]</sup> as “of the spirit as opposed to matter; what is of the soul especially as acted on by God (spiritual life).” “Spirituality” is our human state of being “spiritual” or coming into relationship with a spirit; in our case, with God through Jesus Christ. Thus we can speak of “Christian Spirituality.”

**Christian Spirituality is a serious response that a person makes to God when he reveals his great love for us in Christ.** We can see this in the life of St Francis. Once he fully realized God loved him, his way of acting changed radically. This realization is shown by the way he increased his seeking to know more about God, his loving Him and serving Him and our fellow men and women.

**Christian Spirituality is inter-personal;** it is the life of a person with God. Only people can have **this new relationship with the Trinity** which is given freely by God. Those inspired respond by actions that are both human and transcendent, that is, above our normal way of acting. We see this in a concrete way in the historical person of Jesus Christ. We participate in the sacred events of his life which we call “mysteries” of his life. **We come to an encounter with God. God is real to the spiritual person and there is a genuine union of the spiritual person with Christ as a real person.**

**Man encounters God in the Word of God.** The Word is not only the saving actions of God, apostolic preaching and the inspired accounts in Sacred Scripture; it is especially

and above all, Christ himself, the substantial Word of the Father. He is the living Word that enlivens and brings to fulfilment the words and acts of the past and in whom man makes his personal response to God's love. **Concretely, the Word comes to us through the Church. The Church is the fundamental sacrament revealing and communicating the Word to man.**

Christian spirituality has **many different forms**. We call these "charisms" so that we have the Benedictine, Dominican, Ignatian and Franciscan and other charisms according to the different understanding or approaches each has to Christ. Basically, however, we can say **all of these are expressions of Christian spirituality**. Hans Urs von Balthasar, the Swiss theologian, says that the various Christian spiritualities are **particular expressions of Gospel spirituality**; and the persons or groups which favour some aspect of Gospel life and make it the centre of their Christian existence live the whole Gospel.<sup>[2]</sup> He adds, **"Christ is the source of every spirituality**. The glorified Christ continues his mission of providing the church with other forms of his spirituality in answer to historical needs".

Therefore, when the Church is faced with a new situation or problem, God raises up a particular group who can defend the Church or help the Church in that area of need. For example, when the poor and homeless were in great need God raised up such groups as the Vincentians to help them; or in more recent times, Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta, to help the poor in India. St Francis was called to renew the Church when it was losing the meaning of the Gospel. So, Balthasar continues, "As humanity evolves, Christ serves it by new forms of the Christian life which are always an expression of his mission. Christ does not do this directly or visibly but through one of the faithful, a founder or foundress in as much as he/she embodies the form of Christ and thus provides his/her followers with a standard to follow."<sup>[3]</sup>

So **God called St Francis and St Clare to fulfil a special role**. Firstly, he called them to conversion, to make a radical change in their lives in response to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. This meant that both Francis and Clare had to endure a severe test before they came to understand what God wanted of them. Both had to leave home, make a total commitment to God and follow blindly the inspirations of the Holy Spirit. In doing this, God opened up a new vision to them. This new way of living became the charism that they were to pass on to their followers.

In this Unit we are going to examine the **Franciscan charism or spirituality** more closely. The question we must ask is: "What does it mean to be a Franciscan?" or "What are the characteristics of the Franciscan charism?"

### **What is "Franciscan Spirituality"?**

Francis was aware of his own unique spirituality and the unique experience of God that each individual has.<sup>[4]</sup> Francis had no master plan for the Order, but he protected it and contributed to its formation. "The standard of life for his order was the holy gospel, expressed in a practical following of Christ. **The basis of his spiritual life is to be found in complete poverty of spirit and in the sense that one could not own property, either material or immaterial.**"<sup>[5]</sup> The idea that St Paul expressed about flesh-spirit had a

great influence on Francis' thinking, as we can see in his writings. Obviously, **Franciscan spirituality takes its name from Francis of Assisi**. It is based on the experience of Francis: his experience of God and his style of living the Gospel that has shaped and continues to shape Franciscan spirituality.[\[6\]](#)

**Franciscan Spirituality is not something static**. It has been described 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."*[\[7\]](#) That simply means that men and women followed the example of both Francis and Clare in conforming their lives to Christ.

Murray Bodo describes Franciscan Spirituality as **"Story Spirituality"**[\[8\]](#). He continues, "Franciscan Spirituality is story, just as the Gospel is. Francis and the early friars used to come together only once a year on the feast of Pentecost in Assisi for a "chapter of mats" (as it was called because of the mats they sat on). They had been on the road and they would come back and tell their story of what happened on the road. Our Rule of life of 1221 is simply "tips for the road" and how to live "on the road" as mendicants. These stories were passed on from generation to generation. These embodied what we might call "the Franciscan charism".

There are many different ways that we could describe Franciscan spirituality, but again, as mentioned before, we cannot consider Franciscan spirituality in a vacuum. In examining the main characteristic elements of Franciscan Spirituality and looking at how we live them today, we must consider them as Francis and Clare lived them in the concrete circumstances of their lives. In the following chapters we shall examine some of those characteristic Franciscan concept

## **THE FRANCISCAN JOURNEY TO GOD**

### **Introduction:**

Francis' journey to God was one of **radical conversion** where he followed the Gospel in a literal way; a journey of minority, of charity, and humble recognition of his limits in this earthly life. At the same time, he entered a new spiritual dimension – a journey that brought him to God who was the Lord who called him, who was Love, who was the Most High.[\[9\]](#)

**Three remarkable events shaped Francis' spirituality**. At the age of 23, 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**, where Francis was instructed by the icon of the crucified Christ to "Go repair my church" (cf. Unit One); 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).[\[10\]](#)

So, let us begin by examining some basic concepts:

## 1. Francis' Idea of God

From the Franciscan writings, we can clearly recognize that Francis had only one thought that completely occupied his whole mind: 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.[\[11\]](#)

We might wonder: How did Francis think of God? Francis was no theologian, so if we were to ask him who God was, we could not hope to get a learned answer from him. But one thing stands out: Francis himself 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.[\[12\]](#)

### How did Francis form his image of God?

For Francis, we can see the action of the Holy Spirit opening his soul to God's grace. He lived his life according to the image of God that gradually became clearer to him as time went on. For example, in Francis' life, the action of the Holy Spirit gradually brought him a deeper understanding that came each time he responded to God's call. In this way, Francis succeeded in shaping a singular way of living his Christian life within the Church, because he had experienced God in a unique way. Simply by living his life Francis taught us 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.[\[13\]](#)

### Difficulties in coming to know Francis' Image of God

God was the principal agent in Francis' conversion, but there were other elements that shaped Francis' spirituality, such as his environment, the conditions of his time, etc. From this, we are faced with a danger and a challenge. "...while God's role was supreme, we must not neglect to relate it to the context of Francis' life, which gives it

meaning and which proves its effectiveness. That is, a simple description of concepts taken from Francis' writings is not enough to show the importance which God had in his life. Instead, we need to read his words again in order to rediscover things that were clear to him but which have lost their significance for us because of the changes in the circumstances of time, place and society."[\[14\]](#)

It is not an easy task to discover Francis' idea of God, but we must try to do it at all costs since otherwise we are liable to form an image of God which does not correspond with the living God who transformed Francis and accompanied him during his life.

Again, another difficulty derives from Francis himself who never spoke of his intimate relationship with God. And Francis himself distrusted any brother who was unable to keep to himself the favours the Lord had granted him and who went around talking about them. He could not see how this could benefit anyone. 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, we want to know how Francis represented God to himself.

### **Influences on Francis' forming an image of God**

Here is an attempt to outline the influences that outline some of the ways that Francis came to know God.

#### **1. Early Education**

We have no factual record of Francis' religious formation as a child but should imagine that he followed the normal education of a lay person in his day. He would have "breathed in and absorbed almost unconsciously, just like the other lay people of his own place and time. If we want to find out precisely the elements which contributed directly to Francis' ability to condense his experience and image of God into a popular spirituality, we must examine his immediate background, that is, his family, his schooling, and the liturgy and art of his time.

We are told that Francis attended the parish school of St George which was presided over by a cleric who used the Psalter as a basic textbook to teach him to read and write Latin. He also most likely taught him the fundamentals of the Faith and the Christian life. He had to learn the psalms by heart and this was what formed his first images of God in his heart and mind. The Office of the Passion is proof of the deep impression left on him by learning off the psalms.[\[15\]](#)

#### **2. Liturgy**

Francis expressed his ideas about God through **the language of the Liturgy**. It introduced Francis to the mysterious inner world of religion which made his image of God sharper and more detailed as he came to understand more clearly the symbolism of the words and actions of the priests. And the sermons he heard must have helped, too, since we presume they were acceptably instructive. Bishop Rufino (who was Bishop Guido's predecessor) was one of the first commentators and teachers on the Decree on Grace.

### 3. Religious art

Another source of Francis' idea of God came from **religious pictures and art**. In the Middle Ages, this was the accepted way the people learnt about their faith. Art was used as a teaching tool. All knowledge that would be useful in a person's life – the religious history of the world from Creation onwards, the teaching of the Church, the lives of saints, the virtues – all were depicted in stained-glass windows and in statues on the façade of churches. Each cathedral was a "Bible for the Poor." The poor and illiterate, could see pictured before their eyes almost everything they knew already by faith. In this way, the most important ideas in theology were conveyed – even confusedly – to the humblest of intellects.<sup>[16]</sup>

**4. Popular Devotion** was also another way Francis learnt about God. He heard pious stories and legends as well as teaching on the truths of the faith. For example, the "Legend of Martyrs" written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century relates how Christianity was preached in pagan Assisi by the first bishops, Rufino, Victorino and Savino.

### 5. Contact with others.

No doubt, after his conversion, Francis came into **contact with other men** who were more able to express ideas about God. Speaking with theologians within and from outside his Fraternity, as well as **material he possibly read or heard read**, must have influenced his spiritual growth.

Behind this traditional image of God that Francis knew was **hidden the living God** who utterly changed and broadened his spiritual horizons. The description of Francis' dream at Spoleto by Celano clearly shows this: the change in values which God brought about in him. In his Testament, Francis looks back over his life. He tells us that the forceful presence of the Lord completely changed his approach to everything, for example, his experience with the leper.

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.

#### Activity

Below is a prayer of St Francis praising God. Examine it carefully and then look at the list of names for God in the Psalms (in the table below). Pick out the ones that are the same as or the same meaning or similar to those used by St Francis and mark them. Are there any terms for God that Francis used (or similar) that are not listed here from the psalms? If so, name them.

#### The Praises of God<sup>[17]</sup>

You are holy, Lord,

You alone are God who does wonderful things.

You are strong. You are great.

You are the all-powerful King.

You are the holy Father, the King of heaven and earth.

You are the Lord, God of gods, three and one;

You are the good, all good,  
the sovereign good, Lord God living and true.

You are Love, Charity;

You are wisdom, You are humility;

You are patience; You are beauty.

You are meekness; You are security;

You are inner peace; You are joy.

You are our hope and joy.

You are justice; You are moderation,

You are all our riches; You are enough for us.

You are beauty, You are meekness;

You are a protector; You are our Guardian and Defender;

You are strength; You are refuge.

You are our hope, You are our faith,

You are our charity, You are our sweetness,

You are our eternal life:

Great and wonderful Lord,

All-powerful God, merciful Saviour.

*(Rule of 1223 of St Francis)*

<b><i>Some Images of God in the Psalms</i></b>		
<i>All-Knowing</i>	<i>Freedom, God of</i>	<i>Life-Saving</i>
<i>Almighty</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Light, God of</i>
<i>Beauty, God of</i>	<i>Generous</i>	<i>Listening</i>
<i>Beloved</i>	<i>Gentle</i>	<i>Living</i>

<i>Comforting</i>	<i>Glory, God of</i>	<i>Loving</i>
<i>Compassionate</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Loyal</i>
<i>Constant</i>	<i>Great</i>	<i>Majestic</i>
<i>Creation, God of</i>	<i>Guardian</i>	<i>Merciful</i>
<i>Death, God of</i>	<i>Guiding</i>	<i>Mysterious</i>
<i>Delightful</i>	<i>Happiness, God of</i>	<i>Pardoning</i>
<i>Deserver of Praise</i>	<i>Healing</i>	<i>Peace Maker</i>
<i>Devoted</i>	<i>Hidden</i>	<i>Perfect</i>
<i>Eager</i>	<i>Holy</i>	<i>Poor &amp; Rich, God of</i>
<i>Empowering</i>	<i>Hopeful</i>	<i>Powerful</i>
<i>Encircling</i>	<i>Humble</i>	<i>Protecting</i>
<i>Enlightening</i>	<i>Intimate</i>	<i>Provider</i>
<i>Eternal</i>	<i>Joyful</i>	<i>Reconciling</i>
<i>Faithful</i>	<i>Justice, God of</i>	<i>Redeeming</i>
<i>Father</i>	<i>Kindness, God of</i>	<i>Refreshing</i>
<i>Favouring</i>	<i>Laughter, God of</i>	<i>Reliable</i>
<i>Forgiving</i>	<i>Life-giving</i>	<i>Renewing</i>

**Discuss** the meaning of the titles for God that appeal to you most. Say why you like them and what they mean to you.

**How Francis’ new Image of God changed him**

“Francis left public and populated places seeking solitude, and there he was very often taught by the Holy Spirit...But while he used to frequent these isolated places which he found suitable for prayer, God said to Francis in spirit, ‘leave these worldly and vain pleasures for those of the spirit; prefer bitter things to the sweet, and despise

yourself if you want to know me...because you will taste what I tell you, even if the Order is overturned.”[\[18\]](#)

Moreover, in Francis’ life, we note that as this acquaintance with God grew closer, the appeal and desire for a greater Good became clearer and more concrete and more precise, even though there were outside demands from the world about him. From his infancy, there was developing in the young Francis a generous care for the poor which was divinely implanted in his heart. It had so filled his heart with kindness that, even at that time, he resolved not to be a deaf hearer of the Gospel but to give to everyone who begged especially if he asked for the love of God. (LM 1:1).[\[19\]](#)

Francis’ life was always drawn towards a goal which was God. This goal for Francis was a continual beginning again in his life of faith. He totally forgot himself and placed himself at the service of lepers. He burned with a great desire to return to his earlier humility. Because of his boundless love, he planned to bring his body back to its strength of service, though he was sick. He used to say, “Let us begin to serve the Lord, brothers, for up until now we have done little or nothing.” He did not consider that he had reached his goal, but tirelessly hoped to begin again.

### Conclusion

We cannot yet say that, through this journey, Francis was able to encounter and complete his image of God. After having given many suggested “names” for God, he could not say, “Here is God!” The Christian image of God comes from paintings and icons, and hides in the man who has need of Francis. And the Poverello tells him. “There is no other way to the Father of all than love for him and our brothers. Outside that, it is impossible to encounter the Spirit of God, one and three: Not two loves but one only, for to live and love as brothers and children of the one Father of all, it is necessary to have faith in Christ, and the love of the Spirit.”[\[20\]](#)

Francis began with the Son of Man on this path of fraternal love, which is the path to the Father where all attend to him in heaven. In a beloved brother, in fact, is manifest and hidden the God of Francis and therefore, for him, to love a brother is to feel ignited to go continually beyond the brother to God. **And this certainty of faith is also a certainty of being continually pardoned by God who is always greater than our love, and pardons all of that which our heart accuses us.**[\[21\]](#)

### Reflection

Jesus wanted to reveal a God who is an understanding God, a forgiving and loving God. The God Jesus reveals to us is Yahweh, who wants to be near to us.[\[22\]](#)

### YAHWEH – I AM THERE

I am there - when you are alone

I am there - when you are full of consternation

I am there - when they reject you and cast you out

I am there - when you cannot see any progress

I am there - when you despair and are saddened  
I am there - when you are anxious and afraid  
I am there - when no one likes you  
I am there - when there seems to be a wall between you and your friend  
I am there - when you worry and cannot sleep  
I am there - when someone hurts you  
I am there - when you are in grave danger  
I am there - when you are sick and need help  
I am there - when you cannot bear your sorrow alone  
I am there - when your world falls apart  
I am there - when you need love and are ready to confide  
I am there - when you are suffering great pain  
I am there - when no one listens to you anymore  
I am there - when you can no longer stand upright from exhaustion  
I am there - when you have a bad conscience  
I am there - when you call on me  
I am there - when you die  
I am there - like an angel that protects you in great need  
I am there - like the sun that gives you warmth and joy  
I am there - like a father that makes you feel secure  
I am there - like a mother who feels with you  
I am there - like a heart that is always with you  
I am there - like an eye that always sees you  
I am there - like an arm that supports you  
I am there - like a cloud that envelops you with love  
I am there - like a hand that shows the right way  
I am there - like a light that inspires you well  
I am there - like a voice that tells you  
**that I shall be with you always.**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LIVING IN ACTIVE IMITATION OF CHRIST**

## **Introduction: Faith is Central to Franciscan Life**

The experience of faith in God in the personal coming to know and encounter Jesus Christ is central to Franciscan life. From whatever angle we approach it – such as prayer, fraternity, poverty, presence among men, etc. – the Gospel way of life refers back constantly to faith.

In our search for God, faith is absolutely first in the life of a Franciscan: in adoration and love due to Him; in following Christ and the life according to the Gospel; an openness to the Spirit and constant prayer must be first and foremost in our lives. Whether it be prayer, clothing, poverty, work, begging or food, at the root of our life there is a unique experience of faith in God who is Love... Such an approach in faith will give depth to our spiritual search, whether it be communal or individual, it alone will bear up our prayer.

### **1. CHRIST-CENTRED LIVING**

#### **The following of Christ (*Sequela Christi*)**

The *sequela Christi* (or active following of Christ) just as the apostles did who left everything is an inseparable theme of the teaching of Christ who is the only “Way”, the only Master. We cannot understand this unless we follow him; we do not know on whom we have placed our unconditional faith unless we follow him.

**The crisis of believers today does not arise from the difficulty 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, lived for him and 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 wears 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 bed-room to be called his own; he teaches his followers the ‘Our Father’ and uses the greeting of peace.[\[23\]](#)

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.

“The standard of life for his Order was the holy Gospel, expressed in a practical following of Christ. The basis of his spiritual life is to be found in complete poverty of spirit and in the sense of absolute denial of title to property, either material or immaterial.

**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? It is: **The self-emptying 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.

For Francis, Jesus is God-Man: that man that all saw, who is the Son of God, and those who do not recognize him as such in faith damn themselves. (cf. Adm 1). Even if the Poverello did not spend his time in theological reflections on the mystery of the hypostatic union, however, in his writings he refers to the unique Christ and relative attributes to his transcendence, his humility, his work of salvation of all and his poverty, his condition of being truly human as well as his royalty and at the same time as being servant to all, so that in imitating Christ one could certainly invoke God as Father.

From Francis' *Office of the Passion* it is clear that Francis understood that the Passion was not everything, but it was the only way to glory. It is helpful for all Franciscans to reflect on the hymn in Phil 2:6 – 10 because it describes Christ's self-emptying as the way to his glorification.

**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)[24]*

**Questions:** What does this quote suggest to you about your attitude towards God? How would you apply this to your daily life?

## **2. SYMBOLIC MOMENTS FOR FRANCISCANS:**

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.[25]

### **i) 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 her hands so he carried him naked in his heart....”[\[26\]](#)

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: Francis creates the first crib**

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)[\[27\]](#)

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 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." [\[28\]](#)

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. [\[29\]](#)

"Francis' model in his relationship with God was the Incarnate Son of God. God is our loving Father, whose very commands are expressions of his goodness...For Francis, God's fatherhood embraced all creatures. Since each creature bears in its own way the image of the Father, each is worthy of reverence. Every creature was brother and sister to him, for God is father of all. And all men, no matter what their condition, were the

objects of his special attention, for they are created in the likeness of the Incarnate Son.”[\[30\]](#)

## ii) EUCHARIST

In the time of Francis, the people did not understand the Eucharist very much. They rarely received Communion. However, there was a developing devotion to the Body of Christ especially in its mystical meaning.

At this time, the theology of the Eucharist had not been formulated, but it was still in process. Some people denied the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist; others said it was not valid if it was celebrated by an unworthy priest. Consequently, many of the faithful were confused.

St Francis held strongly to the accepted theology of the Church as he understood it from the Liturgy. He was not a theologian so he used the language of the liturgy to express his faith. The focus at the time was on the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine, even to the extent of neglecting other aspects of Eucharistic theology. Francis and his friars were very balanced in their ideas on the Eucharist. Francis himself reveals a unified vision of the Eucharist.[\[31\]](#)

Francis, in his writings, places great emphasis on veneration for the Body and Blood of Christ either during the celebration of Mass or after. Faith and veneration for the Body and Blood of Christ are two attitudes he strongly taught.[\[32\]](#)

### **Activity: A Story to Read**

#### **The Anonymous Saviour**

*“There stands one among you whom you know not...” Jn 1:16*

This picture was taken (it is said) by a Chinese photographer who was deeply troubled religiously. He photographed the melting snow and the black earth showing through. But when he developed the photograph he was amazed to see in it the face of Christ, full of tenderness and love. He was so convinced that this was more than a coincidence that it moved him to think more deeply about the claims of Christ upon him, and he became a Christian.

#### **Exercise**

It may take you some time to see the face of Christ in this picture, but that difficulty is, perhaps, a symbol of the effort that must often be made to find Him in our world. Yet he is there, in our midst. And once found, as in the picture, he dominates the scene, and it is impossible to miss him. We are left wondering how we could have failed to recognize him earlier.

#### **Francis’ Approach to the Eucharist**

Francis was a man of the people and not a theologian, but he had a very clear vision of faith – even if his language was not technical as expressed in theological schools. Francis did not use such terms as “substance”, “form”, “transubstantiation”, etc. but he used traditional, liturgical and current language of his time, though he was influenced by

some of the modern terms especially when he wanted to emphasize an aspect of truth of the faith or to speak against error. Call to mind the *Testament* when he writes:

“And I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others.”[\[33\]](#)

St Francis did not recognize a division between Eucharistic celebration and the cult towards the Sacrament, but he maintained a single, united vision even if he emphasizes attention to the reality of the body and blood of Christ. The expression “body and blood of Christ” was a formula used by theologians of the time to indicate the Eucharist in its completeness, the same celebration.

Unity for Francis consists in the person of Christ, considered in the bosom of the Father, in the Incarnation and in his sacrificial offering, in the minister at the altar and in the reality of his Eucharistic Body. The Eucharist places the Christian before Christ in his divine and human nature and he invites him to meet him in faith in the Sacrament.

Much of Francis’ teaching on the Eucharist can be found in Admonition 1:

**Admonition One:**

“The Lord Jesus said to his disciples: ‘I am the way, the truth and the life; no one can come to the Father except through me. *If you had known me you would have known my Father; and from now on you will know him and have seen him. Philip says to him, ‘show us the Father and it is enough for us. Jesus says to him: Have I been with you for so long a time and you have not known me? Philip, whoever sees me, sees also the Father. The Father lives in inaccessible light and God is a spirit. No one has ever seen God. Therefore, he cannot be seen except in the Spirit that gives life; and in fact, the flesh does not offer anything. But neither, inasmuch as he is equal to the Father, is the Son seen by anyone other than the Father (or) other than the Holy Spirit.*

Therefore all those who saw the Lord Jesus according to his humanity and did not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Godhead that he is the true Son of God were condemned. And now, in the same way, all those who see the sacrament (of the Body of Christ), which is sanctified by the words of the Lord upon the altar at the hands of the priest in the form of bread and wine, and who do not see and believe according to the Spirit and the Godhead that it is truly the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are condemned. This is attested by the Most High Himself who says, *This is my Body and the Blood of my new testament (which will be poured out for many) and He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.* Therefore, it is the Spirit of the Lord, who lives in his faithful, who receives the most holy Body and Blood of the Lord. All others who do not share in this same Spirit and who presume to receive him eat and drink judgment to themselves. Therefore, O sons of men, how long will you be hard of heart? Why do you not recognize the truth and believe in the Son of God?

See, daily he humbles himself as when he came from the royal throne (Wis 18:15) into the womb of the Virgin; daily he comes to us in a humble form; daily he comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of the priest. And as he

appeared to the holy apostles in true flesh, so now he reveals himself to us in the sacred bread. And as they saw only his flesh by means of their bodily sight, yet believed him to be God as they contemplated him with the eyes of faith, so, as we see bread and wine with our bodily eyes, we too are to see and firmly believe them to be his most holy Body and Blood, living and true. And in this way the Lord is always with his faithful, as he himself says: Behold I am with you even to the end of the world.

**Let us sum up** the main ideas from this Admonition:

- Francis reminds us forcefully how **Christ is central in our journey to the Father**;
- He stresses **various levels of seeing**, contemplating and beholding the Father with the eyes of the flesh or those of the Spirit. There is a deep, inner struggle of the human being. E.g. Thomas' doubt and Phillip asking "Show us the Father?".
- The **foundation of the spiritual life**: "*Whoever sees me, sees the Father*" The place of Christ as 'revelation of the Father' is central in Admonition 1. The 'contemplative gaze' of Adm 1 draws attention to the activity of the Holy Spirit and helps us see Christ in the Incarnation, the revelation of Christ to us in the Eucharist.
- It is only **through the medium of the Holy Spirit** that we can cut through the outer appearances to see and believe 'according to the Spirit and Divinity.' Upon this foundation – composed of a remarkable Trinitarian vision and a strong influence of the Spirit – Francis reveals the fruit of his own contemplation of the Incarnate Word remaining with us in the Eucharist.
- Francis reminds us of **the humility of the Son of God** who emptied himself so that we might see and believe in him and make our way to him and to the Father.
- He affirms the personal presence of the Lord with the faithful in a personal offering of himself. "I am with you always until the end of the world."
- The Mass for Francis is not simply the recalling of the work of redemption of Christ, but the true actuality for us: "In him one has the true body and the true blood, living and true," the true and real sacrifice, Christ, living and glorious, true God, who offers us life and salvation.

From these ideas Francis derived such great respect, purity of heart and body, a right intention and profound faith so that in the celebrating on the part of priests as in the attending and receiving Communion on the part of the faithful. [\[34\]](#)

### **Francis' Teaching on Communion**

St Francis' teaching on Communion is particularly rich and makes one marvel since at the time sacramental participation was so rare that it caused the 4<sup>th</sup> Lateran Council to establish the minimum for receiving Communion as one year:

- **The necessity of Communion** was a theme dear to St Francis and he recommended it many times. Communion is a response to Christ's command

and is carried out in his memory. Remember, at that time, there was no custom yet of receiving Communion outside the Mass except for the dying.

- Francis places great emphasis on **veneration for the Body and Blood of Christ** either during the celebration of Mass or after. Faith and veneration for the Body and Blood of Christ are two attitudes he strongly teaches. He seems to be devoured by this passion because he wants to avoid any negligence and show the greatest reverence “because, I promise you, my brothers, kissing your feet with the love that I am able, write to the Capitulars...” [\[35\]](#)

It is clear that this is why he directs his words to clerics to take great care in administering the Sacraments, particularly the Eucharist. He also points out that all sacred vessels that come in contact with the Blessed Sacrament should be kept clean, as well as the church and everything in it.

**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  
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.

### iii) CALVARY

The self-emptying of Christ could not be clearer than Jesus' suffering and death on Calvary. 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.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD OF GOD; AND THE BROTHER/ SISTERHOOD OF ALL CREATURES

#### 1. What does "Universal Fatherhood 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:

*“<sup>1</sup> 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.*

*<sup>2</sup> Through our own fault we fell.*

*<sup>3</sup> 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.*

*<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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. 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.

Francis' way of life was based on the Person of Jesus Christ whom Francis saw as "the Good News dwelling among us". Francis' 'Gospel life' was none other than the experience of the presence of God through Christ in an intimate personal relationship with Christ and through Christ with everyone and everything. They were to him 'brothers and sisters' first of all in the poor, the sick and abandoned and ultimately to all creation.

## 2. We are a Brotherhood or Sisterhood

In this section, we examine the question: "Who are we as Franciscan brothers and sisters?"

We saw earlier in Unit One there are **different levels of relationship**: natural and a spiritual; or on a Christian level and a Franciscan level which is a particular expression of Christian brother/sisterhood. Here we look into Franciscan brother/sisterhood.

## 3. Characteristics of Franciscan Brotherhood/ Sisterhood

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 the community 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." [\[36\]](#)

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 must be genuine, indiscriminating witnesses to the Gospel. Positively, we must seek to be peace-makers and reconciling one with the other both within and outside our communities.

Another aspect that we could consider is **minority** as an expression of our poverty which we shall see in more detail later. [\[37\]](#)

## 4. Universal Brotherhood / Sisterhood

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:[\[38\]](#)

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)

### **The Story of a Modern Saint:**

#### **ST MAXIMILIAN KOLBE**

Raymond was the second son of a poor family who lived in Russian occupied Poland. He was born on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 1894. Both his parents were Secular Franciscans and worked at home as weavers. His father, Julius, ran a religious book store. He joined the army to fight for independence against the Russians. Unfortunately, he was captured and hanged as a traitor in 1914. His mother later became a Benedictine nun. His brother, Alphonse, became a priest.

Raymond was a mischievous child and sometimes a trial for his parents. But when he was 12 years old, he had a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary which changed his life. He asked her what was to become of him. She held out two crowns, one was white; the other red. She asked him which of these he would like to choose. The white crown represented purity and the red one, martyrdom. He replied that he wanted them both.

Raymond entered the Franciscan Conventual Order and took the religious name Maximilian. He made his first vows on 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1911 and did his studies for the priesthood in Rome. During that time, he founded a group called *The Crusade of Mary*. They had particular devotion to Mary.

Maximilian was ordained on the 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1918 even though he had suffered from bad health that nearly killed him. Maximilian was a good student and received his Doctorate of Theology in 1922. He returned to Poland to teach history in the seminary at Crakow. He took leave from August 1920 until April 1921 to have treatment for tuberculosis. He also began publishing his magazine *Knight of the Immaculate* to fight against people who did not care about religion. By 1927, the magazine had a press run of 70,000 issues. He was forced to take another medical leave but the work continued. He was given land and the means to increase his productions. His magazine reached over 750, 000 copies a month.

Wishing to spread his work further, Maximilian set out with four brothers for Japan in 1930. Within a month, Maximilian was printing a Japanese version of *Knight of the Immaculate*. By 1936, its circulation grew to 65,000. In 1936, Maximilian founded a monastery in Nagasaki. It survived the war and the nuclear bombing and serves today as a centre of Franciscan work.

Due to bad health, Maximilian returned to Poland. On the 8<sup>th</sup> December 1938, the monastery began its own radio station. In 1939, the monastery housed more than 800 men, the largest in the world in its day. It was completely self-sufficient.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1939 Maximilian and several of his brothers were arrested by the Nazis after the occupation of Poland. Others at the monastery were briefly exiled, but the prisoners were released on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1939 and the men returned to work. However the presses were shut down and the congregation was suppressed. Maximilian was imprisoned again in Pawiak prison, Warsaw in Poland on the 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1941. In May that year, he was transferred to Auschwitz and branded "prisoner 16670," and assigned to a special work group staffed by priests and supervised by vicious, abusive guards.

Maximilian's calm dedication to his faith brought him the worst jobs available, and more beatings than anyone else. At one time he was beaten, whipped and left for dead. The other prisoners managed to smuggle him into the camp hospital where he spent his time while recovering in hearing confessions. When he returned to camp, Maximilian ministered to other prisoners, including celebrating Mass and distributing Communion using smuggled bread and wine.

In July, 1941, there was an escape from the camp. The commander announced that ten men would die. He enjoyed walking along the ranks picking out the victims. "This one. That one." As they were being marched away to the starvation bunkers, Number 16670 stepped forward. "I would like to take that man's place. He has a wife and children." "Who are you?" the commander asked. "A priest," Maximilian replied. No name, no mention of fame. Silence. The commander was amazed, perhaps shocked. He pulled Sergeant Francis Gajowniczek out of line and ordered Fr Kolbe to go with the nine.

In the block of death, they were ordered to strip naked and the slow starvation began in darkness. But there was no screaming – the prisoners sang. By the eve of the Assumption four were left alive. The jailor came to finish Kolbe off as he sat in a corner praying. He lifted his fleshless arm to receive the bite of the hypodermic needle. It was filled with carbolic acid. They burned his body with all the others. He was beatified in 1971 and canonized in 1982. The words of Jesus ring true: "No greater love has any man than to lay down his life for his friends." [\[39\]](#)

### Discussion Questions

- What comes to mind when you reflect on the story of Maximilian Kolbe?

- Can you think of a situation in your life where you had to make a hard decision to help someone else? How did you react? Why?
- Does true brotherhood / sisterhood function in your community? In what ways?
- How do you think this idea of Universal Brotherhood / Sisterhood could affect the wider community? How can we support this idea?

## **5. SOME IMPLICATIONS OF FRANCISCAN BROTHER/SISTERHOOD**

Brotherhood / Sisterhood are central to Franciscan life. The concept runs through practically every aspect of Franciscan living. Here are some: the way we live our community life, the way we live our vows or promises, the motivation for loyalty to the Order and Fraternity, our view of creation and the way we govern, etc. It is so important that we need to spend more time in considering it. We present some brief notes:

### **1) The Nature and Purpose of Franciscan Brotherhood / Sisterhood**

Franciscan brotherhood or Sisterhood could be described as “itinerant apostles”, that is, wandering disciples of Christ, preaching at least by example. This missionary vocation was given to Francis at San Damiano when he knelt before the crucifix and he was told to go and rebuild the Church which was falling into ruins. We know his gradual conversion experiences and the highest point of it when he exclaimed, “This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I want with all my heart!” This is when he came to understand his vocation.

Franciscans are sent into the world to bring peace. This is a task given to them by the Church: to preach conversion to the Gospel, and penance through the example of their lives.

Francis and his followers modelled their lives on Christ’s brotherhood with his apostles and try to bring that witness to the world. By their profession, Franciscans make an agreement with Christ to conform themselves in their lives of consecration according to the example of St Francis whose life was one of continual conversion and renewal. Just as Francis worked to bring about the conversion and renewal of others, so we, as his followers, try to do the same.

According to our Rule, we promise to remain together, helping each other to realize the potential of each one’s spiritual personality, in celebrating their culture and then to offer the world service and salvation in announcing peace.

### **2) The Bond of Love**

St Francis reminded us that to love a brother (or sister) is to have a gift from God. With this gift God expresses his love and his care for us. The gift of the first brother that God gave St Francis filled him with extraordinary joy. It seemed to him that the Lord cared for him, giving him a companion and a faithful friend – of whom we all have need. Francis loved his brothers greatly with all his heart because they shared the same faith amongst themselves, the same vocation and mission. He loved them as members of his family with the same faith, united by a share in an eternal inheritance. [\[40\]](#)

Offences against the brotherhood are offences against the fatherhood of God who loves his children with an immense love. When he was not helped in his need, or when scornful words were directed at him, Francis took refuge in prayer. After this encounter with the Father of all who is in heaven, he didn't want to ever remember the insults he received. (LegP106; Spec 46).

In practice, this means for us Franciscans that we live honestly and intimately with each other in our religious community. This encounter will make us stronger to go out and serve others outside our community with greater understanding.

### **3) An Expression of Obedience**

Since we are children of God who is our Father, we must be obedient to his commands. The brothers (sisters) are in true obedience and blessed by the Lord when they observe his commands which they promised to obey, that is, the gospel and our form of life.

The brothers (sisters) should not only do no evil among themselves, but through "charity of spirit" serve and obey each other willingly. This is true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ (Rnb 5:20). In this loving obedience, the brothers (sisters) must put themselves at the service of each other in the "obedience of charity" and in the love for the fraternity. (1 Pet 1:22)

Those in the fraternity who have offices of responsibility must study how to serve each other more for the sake of virtue and holiness of life than for the sake of the office, until provoked by his example, others will obey more out of love than out of fear. (Reg C 4). For the sake of this obedience in the fraternity, St Francis declares that he would be disposed to obey just a novice should he be given to him as his Guardian. "If St Francis had asked, the Lord would have been able to do it. If there were no prelate more fearful to his subjects in all the world as he, he would prefer to adapt himself to all as though he were the lest of all the brothers of the Order. (Leg P 106, Spec 46)

### **4) An Expression of Poverty**

Whoever is poor will seek to work together with others to solve their problems; whoever is rich creates barriers of protection around his riches. Riches divide and set a person apart. Those attracted to riches give their heart to these and no longer love their brothers. The rich man does not give but imposes himself. He doesn't offer his riches to help his brother in need, but stands over him.

Fraternity is a gift one offers and accepts in poverty of all the sons of God, because whoever is not poor and humble is not capable of offering the gift of himself. Pilgrims and strangers in this world, the poor man places himself with faith at "the table of the Lord," abandoning himself to the Providence of the Lord and to the work of poor people. The sons of God find themselves together "at the table of the Lord" so as to give and receive love and bread.

St Francis wanted to express brotherhood and the poverty of all the sons of God gathered around the table of their heavenly Father, when, as guest of Cardinal Hugolino, he took bread which he had received as an alms and he distributed a little to each of the knights and chaplains of the Bishop, as a gift from the Lord God. They all received it with great devotion (Leg P 61). At the table of the Lord, the brothers who are able to help their brothers in need are enriched by the brothers whom they help, creating brotherhood and communion: in them there was only one heart and one mind. (Acts 4:32). The sons of God are recognized in the breaking of bread.[\[41\]](#)

### **5) An Expression of Chastity**

It is important that we take a positive view of chastity. Being chaste for Francis did not mean giving up something but rather embracing wholeheartedly a God who was kind enough to become a human being to show his love for his sinner-friends.

“Just as married people have each other to satisfy intimacy needs and to help each other feel “at home”, we have our community. Yet I can’t expect friendship, love and support without also giving them to others. I can’t demand a ready-made, loving community wherever I go without effort on my part. Community does not depend on others any more than it does on me. Rather than an anonymous group to be blamed for everything wrong, community is, first of all, the persons with whom I presently live and, secondly, the whole group of those with whom I have thrown in my lot. Our mutual love frees us to put our attention on loving the people and the God we serve. The process begins when I choose to start it.”[\[42\]](#)

### **6) An Expression of Life**

Because one does not choose one’s brothers or sisters, but accepts them, there is no true brotherhood or sisterhood if one does not accept entering into the life of our brother or sister, and if one does not consent to allowing others to enter into ours. Without this communion of life, the brotherhood / sisterhood would only remain like a club where the members have no interest in each other. Franciscan brotherhood or sisterhood is a witness of love which comes from God and which brings us together in God, so that all may be one. This communion already in action amongst the sons of God will be fully realised in the future life.

St Francis very realistically placed the obligation of community life on his brothers basing this on his Gospel intuition: “They have behaved among themselves as the Lord says, as you would have one act towards you, so you must act towards another,” and again, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” (Rnb 4)

To safeguard their community life, the brothers must watch out for pride, vainglory, hatred, avarice, from the cries and worries of this world, from detraction and murmuring (Rb 10). St Clare adds that the Poor Clare Sisters must guard against discord and division. (RSC 10): “The sisters are to gather together to live in “holy unity’. They must have all in common with the purpose of preserving mutual charity and peace. All the responsible offices of the monastery must be elected with the common consent of all the sisters.”

Celano speaks of the life of the first Poor Clare sisters with great admiration: “What dominates among them, above everything, is the virtue of a continual and mutual charity which profoundly unites them so that wanting and not wanting the same things, they form one spirit out of many.” [43]

Speaking of the love that the first brothers had amongst themselves, Celano observes that they were bound to each other like living stones and bound them by charity, they constructed a temple of the Lord. Every time and every place they would chance to meet each other along the road, there is to be a veritable explosion of spiritual love which was the source of true fraternal love.

### **7) As an Expression of Loyalty**

Loyalty and respect are interchangeable. More than being a moral duty, they are the consequence of an approach to life, created in the communion of blood bonds and spiritual bonds. One does not have love for another if one is not loyal one to the other. Loyalty is an expression of respect, and respect is an expression of consideration and esteem. God himself who loves us, respects our freedom and treats us as an equal. He does not impose love for himself on us but he teaches only what love is: Love is union and respect.

St Francis is fully aware that loyalty and respect are essential to love, and he wanted the brothers, even when they travelled about the world, “not to judge anyone; they are not to quarrel with anyone, but must be moderate, peaceful and modest, meek and humble, speaking honestly to all as is fitting.” (Rb 2)

Each one must take on oneself the responsibility for his or her actions, always and wherever, with loyalty and respect: “Blessed is the servant who knows how to love and fear his brother when he is a long way away, as if he were present or close to him, and does not speak behind his back and does not say anything that he could not say charitably to his face.” (Adm 15)

Respect means understanding the other person and should not grow less, not even if he is mistaken. “The brothers must watch themselves not to get angry with or disturbed over the sin of their confreres because anger and disturbance prevent charity in themselves and in others.” (Rb 7). The brother who comes to know about the sin of another brother of his, must not put him to shame, facing him with his sin, but he must have great pity for him because “it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” (Lmin 257)

Amongst all the vices, St Francis hated detraction particularly. One day when he heard a brother putting down the good name of another brother, he turned to his vicar, Peter Cataneo, and said, “They incur grave danger to the Order if one does not remedy detractors.” Very quickly, the beautiful perfume of many will change into a disgusting stink if they do not shut up and stop such poison.”

Take courage! Move yourselves! Examine diligently, and if you find a brother is innocent who has been accused, punish the accuser severely and with an exemplary punishment. “I wish,” he used to say, “that you and all the ministers, with all diligence,

do not let such an evil spread anymore.” (2 Cel 182) Also, with full understanding towards brothers who err, St Francis was well aware that spiritual brotherhood has its own needs of charity, but also of justice.

### **8) As an Expression of Love for Ecology**

The spirit of St Francis reflected on all created things because he saw in them the reflection of God’s love. This transparency allowed him to come close to all things created with the heart of a child, restoring a relationship that he expressed in his *Canticle of Joy* which is a prelude to freeing us from corruption and sin and death. Because all created things proclaim the glory of God, Francis wanted to sing his love to the Most High all-powerful and good Lord with all his creatures. Cf. *The Canticle of the Sun*.

#### **How did Francis apply his understanding of Brotherhood to all creation?**

We find this expressed in his well-known “Canticle of the Sun (Creatures)”[\[44\]](#)

#### **The Canticle of the Creatures**[\[45\]](#)

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 be You, my Lord, with all Your creatures,

Especially Sir Brother Sun,

Who is the day and through whom You give us light.

And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour;

And bears a likeness to You, Most High One.

Praised be you, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars

In heaven you formed them clear and precious and beautiful.

Praised by You, my Lord, through Brother Wind,

And through the air, cloudy and serene, and every kind of weather,

Through whom you give sustenance to Your creatures.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Water,

Who is very useful and humble and precious and chaste.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brother Fire,

Through whom you light the night,

And he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Mother Earth,  
Who sustains and governs us,  
And who produces various fruit with coloured flowers and herbs.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through those who give pardon for Your love,  
And bear infirmity and tribulation.  
Blessed are they who endure in peace  
For by You, Most High, shall they be crowned.  
Praised be You, my Lord, through our Sister Bodily Death,  
From whom no one living can escape.  
Woe to those who die in mortal sin.  
Blessed are those whom death shall find in Your most holy will,  
For the second death shall do them no harm.  
Praised and bless my Lord and give Him thanks  
And serve Him with great humility

Essential for understanding the canticle is Francis' idea that the Incarnation somehow involved the sanctification of nature. Christ is central to Francis' view of creation. The Franciscan doctrine on the primacy of Christ is built on this notion (developed by Blessed Duns Scotus). Though there is no explicit mention of Christ in the Canticle, it is there through symbols. The Canticle is entirely penetrated by this mystery of the Incarnation.

This magnificent hymn expresses the mystical vision of the Saint of Assisi and, since it springs from the depths of his soul, provides us with many insights into the profundity of his life of faith in the Triune God, who so deeply enters into creation. In this vision, however, the Little Poor Man does not lose himself in space or in the vastness of the created world. He becomes so intimate and familiar with the wonders of creation that he embraces them as "Brother" and "Sister," that is, members of one family. More than any other aspect of the Canticle, the unique feature has enhanced the spiritual tradition of Christian spirituality.[\[46\]](#)

**Some historical notes:**

The main theologians who formulated Franciscan spirituality were:

**St Anthony of Padua** (d. 1231) preacher; and **Alexander of Hales** (d. 1454) a master at Paris – who reflect the seraphic vision, especially in their Christ-centred approach. Alexander was the one who gave Franciscans the beginnings of an appropriate theological system.

**St Bonaventure** (1221 – 1274), as Minister General, affected the practical life of the Order. He is often called the “Second Founder” of the Order. He composed the most thorough exposition of Franciscan mysticism. He stressed God’s part in man’s journey to God.

**John Duns Scotus** (d. 1308) gave Franciscan spirituality its theological cornerstone in his doctrine on the absolute primacy of Christ.

**Some Discussion Questions to Reflect on:**

- How do you understand the “personal intimacy” that St Francis suggests?
- What are some practical ways that we can “serve each other” in community?
- How do Francis and Clare see riches as a barrier to fraternal life?
- What are some ways we could use to build up our Franciscan community?

## **CHAPTER FOUR - ST CLARE’S APPROACH TO FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY**

### **Introduction: Review**

We saw in Unit Three, the story of Clare’s life and her way of life at San Damiano with her sisters. Here, we examine some more ideas about her contemplative life.

It is true to say that Clare was a true disciple of St Francis and that her spirituality was Franciscan, but we can also say that her unique approach which expressed Francis’ spirituality in a different way. We can only speak here briefly of some of these characteristics which we shall consider after a quick look at a review of her story.

The Order of Poor Clares was begun with the clothing of Clare in the Portiuncola on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1211.[\[47\]](#) But we know that it was already in Francis’ mind shortly after his own conversion, when he was restoring the church of San Damiano. Clare describes this in her Testament in the following words:

“For, almost immediately after his conversion, while as yet he had neither brothers nor companions, when he was building the Church of San Damiano in which he was totally filled with divine consolation, he was led to abandon the world completely. This holy man, in great joy and enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, made a prophecy about us which the Lord fulfilled later. Climbing the wall of that church, he shouted in French to some people who were standing nearby: ‘Come and help me build the monastery of San Damiano, because ladies will dwell here who will glorify our heavenly Father throughout His holy Church by their celebrated and holy manner of life.’”[\[48\]](#)

This was a poor beginning in every sense of the word. Neither Francis nor Clare knew clearly God’s design, but they abandoned themselves to him day by day to discover

God's will in absolute trust. After a brief stay with the Benedictine nuns, Clare began her life at San Damiano with a few sisters which the Lord had given her after her conversion.

Her life was organized simply according to the form of life given to her by Francis. We know that Francis gave Clare not only a new idea of the Gospel and a new vision of Christ, but also certain norms according to which that small group of inexperienced but fervent pioneers could order their fraternal life properly together. It was a life based on the Gospel they had to invent, recognizing difficult moments in those first years when poverty was close to misery when the world criticized these women who wanted to live in what the world considered so impossible a way. It was precisely through this way of acting, carrying the cross daily, that the quality of these young women was shown. They did not fear poverty, fatigue, tribulation and criticism of the world, but rather they rejoiced at such suffering.[\[49\]](#)

With the number of sisters increasing, Clare saw that it was necessary to make major adjustments to her rule. This was also required by the Fourth Lateran Council. Cardinal Hugolino gave his Rule to San Damiano under the name of the *Hugolino Constitutions* because the sisters were bound to obey the Benedictine Rule. Even Clare and her sisters had to obey this Rule which was not in line with the ideal of poverty that they had embraced. The difficulties of the battle they had to endure to defend most high poverty was a dominant feature of Clare's life and which led her to write her own Rule based on the Rule of the Friars Minor of St Francis, and which she had the joy of seeing approved only two days before her death.

The basic elements of this new way of life were expressed in the Bull of approval of the Rule of St Clare[\[50\]](#) which speaks of the union of spirits and the most high poverty, as living within the cloister. These are the visible signs of an interior life centred on love of the poor and crucified Christ. Contemplation based on love was central to Clare's way of life.

The essence of the life of the Poor Ladies was first, and above all else, the love of the person of Christ in response to his love. We are considering here the giving of oneself to Christ...they did not want to possess anything but Christ. Their spirituality can be expressed in this way:

He, the Son of God who made himself our way and bound personally to Jesus Christ with ardent and passionate love is, therefore, without doubt, the basis in building up Clare and her companions' religious life. Their life was to be for the sake of Christ, in view of Christ, being near Christ and totally committed to him.

Clearly, Clare could not be considered without considering Christ. The two are inseparable. In contemplation, Clare is always in the company of Jesus Christ. We saw that, like Francis, the central focus Clare had was on the poverty of the Son of God. This was why she chose total poverty. This self-emptying or "kenosis" of Christ did not hide the action of the Spirit. It was the Spirit working in Clare, who was the source of inspiration and whose activity produced mystical union.

#### **KEY THEMES IN CLARE'S APPROACH TO FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY**

We could sum up the key themes in St Clare's spirituality as the following:

1. Poverty and the Passion of Christ;
2. The Primacy of Love
3. The Incarnation and the Redemption
4. Mirroring Christ in the World
5. Life of Prayer

### **1. MOST HIGH POVERTY**

It was only this loving contemplation and a strong desire to possess the Crucified Christ that gave meaning to Clare's longing to live a poor life. This is what she passed on to her daughters. Her insistence on the "Privilege of Poverty" was not to be seen as a legal document, but as an element of life, the source of which was her great desire to imitate Christ, with the love of poverty which she had chosen and loved; in fact, she wanted to appear to the world "as a man despised, needy and poor." (LAg 19)

Clare felt that her Order would be faithful to this poverty if it understood the entire journey of the self-emptying of Christ, not only by depriving themselves of material things, but also by seeing them as the very cause of having an attachment to them. In this way, they could live their vocation in the Church. She entrusted all her sisters – those present and those to come – to the care of holy mother, the Roman Church. The Church was to care for the "little flock" and encourage the sisters to preserve that poverty they had promised God and our holy Father Francis.

#### **The spiritual motive for poverty**

Total poverty, the most profound poverty desired by Clare as "their portion of the inheritance" would bring them to the land of the living – to life, communion with the Father and the brothers in the Son. It would bring them to the great household (*koinania*) of charity and be introduced into the saving mystery of Christ. They would then participate in his self-emptying, die with Christ; and share the same death as the Crucified. They would be made one with his death-life; our self-emptying becomes a mystery of salvation for us and an expansion of charity – for the coming of the Kingdom.

Clare modelled her life on the humanity of Jesus. By gazing upon the image of the crucified Christ, Clare came to identify with his poverty, and this became the foundation for her own practice of poverty. Because Jesus was born poor and naked in the crib and died poor and naked on the cross, the only way Clare knew to imitate him was also to be poor.<sup>[51]</sup> It was genius of Francis that Clare realized that life without anything of one's own frees us to enter more deeply into the mystery of God and his kingdom. She proclaims in her letter to Agnes of Prague: "O blessed poverty who bestows eternal riches on those who love and embrace her!"<sup>[52]</sup>

## Living Poverty

Poverty must also be material because only the one who strips himself of everything is capable of tasting the unique riches which is Christ, “because when one loves temporal things, one loses the fruit of charity.” (1 L Ag 25) However, poverty must be **spiritual**, that is, according to the Spirit and through interior self-emptying which is victory over the “old man”, and becomes profound **humility** towards the most high Giver from whom all things come and before all creatures.

With poverty we could also note Clare’s humility and charity. “In imitating Jesus, Clare particularly stressed imitating the poverty, humility and charity of Jesus. In order to clothe herself in these virtues, Clare meditated on the cross. Clare considered the Crucified Christ as a mirror of the invisible God. By contemplating the crucified Christ and imitating his virtues, Clare sought to become a mirror of Christ.” [\[53\]](#)

Franciscan “stripping oneself” is made concrete in a particular way by **obedience** by which one renounces one’s own will: “The sisters who are subject, must remember they have renounced their own will for the love of God.”

In Francis’ view, Clare wanted a form of poverty which would distinguish her institution from all others - a state of poverty lived with such fullness so as to constitute in the history of religious life, *a peak or resplendent summit which would glow in the Church of the Poor like a lamp and light up the whole house*. Clare reminds the People of God that her true fatherland is elsewhere and that she is destined to benefits infinitely more desirable than earthly ones.

In what in this seeking of Most High Poverty that Clare showed herself to be most courageous and strong against the opposition that continued until the time of her death.

### Discussion Questions

- What is the ideal of poverty for you in practice today?
- How would you apply your ideal to community life?
- How would you apply it to your personal life?
- How does poverty tie in with humility and charity?

## 2. THE PRIMACY OF LOVE [\[54\]](#)

“When one loves material things, one loses the fruit of love” (1 L Ag 25). So says Clare and with this she introduces us to the heart of her charism which lives total poverty precisely as an opening to love – the spreading of gratuitous love. Only the one who has nothing to lose because he or she has given up everything, can respond generously to love. He or she can have feelings for Christ, put on Christ (Rom 13:14),

give a place to the Spirit who is the Father of the poor and continually give thanks to the Most High God, who is the Most High Heavenly Father.

This great love is for God alone, and brings with it a gift of love towards brothers, on whom the face of Christ is reflected (2 Cor 4:6) and, above all, it reflects on the sisters who share this same marvellous Gospel adventure.

This unique love of Christ which animates the sisters is the primary source of fraternal communion. This unique possession of Christ becomes stronger in tightening the bonds of love. Like the brothers, the poor sisters are a poor and humble people “happy to possess him alone, the Most High and Glorious.

The love that unites the sisters together is a concrete and visible sign of this unity in God. “Love each other in the love of Christ,” (Test C 59); and again, “If a mother loves and nourishes her child of the flesh, with how much more care should a sister nourish and love her spiritual sister.” (R Cl)

Fraternal life is the second hinge of the new way of life begun at San Damiano. Love is the first characteristic which Celano highlights. Speaking about the San Damiano community, he says:

“The virtue of mutual and continual charity, that binds their will together, flourishes among them. Forty or fifty of them can dwell together in one place, wanting and not wanting the same things, forming one spirit in them out of many.” [\[55\]](#)

The guide for their daily, simple living together was love. Love ruled the relationship between the abbess and the sisters. The abbess admonished and visited the sisters, corrected them with humility and charity.

Clare says in her *Testament*:

“Let her also be so kind and available that they may safely reveal their needs, and confidently have recourse to her at any hour, as they see fit both for themselves and their sisters.” (Test C 65 – 66)

“I want the sisters to obey their mother, as they, of their own will, promised the Lord” so that seeing the charity, humility and the union that they have towards each other, their mother might bear all the burdens of office more easily.” (Test C 69)

Love is expressed more concretely by following the Gospel’s admonition about pardoning (Mt 5:23) which must always nourish the life of the community. On their journey to salvation, our own weakness is a daily experience. Therefore, if anyone should fall through weakness by word or action and become an occasion of disturbance or scandal, the one who caused such trouble, should immediately, before coming before the Lord offering prayer, not only throw herself at the feet of the other seeking pardon, but also in simplicity, ask her to intercede for her before the Lord. “If you don’t forgive from your heart, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you.” she should generously pardon her sister every offence she has committed against her. (R Cl 9:7 – 10)

### **3. THE INCARNATION AND REDEMPTION**

Clare's spirituality centres on the two central mysteries of the Christian faith: the Incarnation and Redemption. As she considered the birth of Jesus and the way the Virgin Mother enclosed Jesus in her womb, Clare came to the understanding that it is the privilege of each soul to be a dwelling place for God. Thus Mary, the Christ-bearer, became her model. When Pope Alexander IV canonized Clare, he called her "the footprint of the Mother of God" because of her belief that each person should give birth to Christ in the soul and because of her many references to the role of the mother in the Redemption." [\[56\]](#)

#### **What motivated Clare and her Sisters?**

The very foundation on which Clare and her sisters built their life was their intense seeking of a close relationship with God. For anyone enclosed as contemplatives, this is a difficult task. In day to day living of their lives there must be firstly, a deep faith, and a strong longing for spiritual growth. These qualities are not able to be seen and don't appear to show rewards immediately. It must have been even more difficult for Clare as her reflections in her Testament reveal. We can also gain some insights into her life from her Rule and her letters to Agnes of Prague, and what her sisters had to say about her in the process of Canonization. These are very valuable sources for coming to know Clare, as we have already mentioned earlier.

Although Clare used different forms to express her ideas, as a whole, Clare's writings show a deep unity of thought. "In her Rule Clare outlines literally what is literally the heart of her 'Form of Life', that is, the fundamental evangelical elements about which she was uncompromising. This document clarifies and fully expresses what she meant by 'to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel' (R Cl 6:3)." [\[57\]](#)

### **4. MIRRORING CHRIST IN THE WORLD**

Clare carried the imitation of Jesus to practical terms, urging the Poor Ladies "that they in turn might be a mirror and example to those living in the world" and to each other. Clare exhorted her sisters to live as examples and mirrors of God, especially for those with whom they lived. In this way, the Reign of God is spread. Clare taught that the bond of holiness stretched far beyond her small community, and she served others by showing a way to God.

### **5. LIFE OF PRAYER**

When we look at the rules governing San Damiano during Clare's life and that which she left to her sisters at her death, we can see immediately that the pace of the convent was governed by a life of prayer becomes evident, especially the Liturgy of the Hours, seven times daily. This meant that their activities revolved around the times of prayer.

This undertaking would necessarily have prevented the sisters from taking on large projects or involving them in demanding work. Prayer was the principal activity of the day. Clare herself frequently prayed the Office of the Passion composed by St Francis; and the Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Clearly, **prayer was central to their lives and all other duties took a lower place.** Prayer shaped their way of thinking, reckoning time and interpreting history. E.g. events were related to certain feasts as points of reference, such as, events in the life of Clare. [\[58\]](#)

Clare, in her humility, tells us very little about her practice of prayer. We must turn to her writings to read between the lines for any clues or insights and, in so doing, her crystal clear life of prayer. The *Testament*, above all, focuses on the aspect of Clare's relationship with God. While in her *Rule* she refers to God as the "Most High Heavenly Father," in the *Testament* she speaks more descriptively of the "Father of mercies" and of his mercy, love and grace. Like Francis, she repeats that it is only through the mercy and love of God, not our merits, that good is accomplished. With great conviction, she expresses gratitude for the daily initiative of "the glorious Father of Christ" in bestowing so many gifts upon us. She expresses this when she writes to Agnes of Prague:

"I give thanks to the Giver of grace, from whom we believe, every good and perfect gift proceeds."

Everything comes from his generosity: the call to following His way, that way which is the Son of God; Francis who gave Clare and her sisters deeper insights into the Way. The God of the *Testament*, whom Clare recognizes in her poverty as a loving Father, enlightens her heart, places Francis on the path of her life, inspires her to conversion, gives sisters to her, leads her to San Damiano, and makes her community grow. [\[59\]](#)

Note how Clare outlines the events of her life and recognizes the plan of God in them as these events unfold. She sees many reasons to give thanks and praise helping us also to do the same.

Repeatedly we come across Clare encouraging others to focus on the Lord. Her words to Agnes illustrate this:

"May you totally love him who gave himself totally for your love."

"Cling to him whose beauty all the blessed hosts of heaven unceasingly admire"

"Look upon him Who became contemptible for you."

When we read her writings and see this increased awareness of the presence of Christ, we are left with the impression that Clare was a woman passionately in love with Him. She offers very few intellectual or practical formulas for making progress in the life of prayer. It is almost as if Clare consciously wanted to teach her sisters that prayer was simply a matter of falling in love, a process that defies plans, methods or well defined approaches. On the contrary, in light of the numerous reflections on the mystery of Christ in her letters to Agnes, she suggests that the development of a life of prayer comes only through focussing our attention on Him.

From this perspective, then, we can appreciate the simple formula that Clare offers Agnes in her second letter:

“O most noble Queen, gaze upon Him, consider Him, contemplate Him as you desire to imitate Him”. This is, perhaps, the only insight we have into Clare’s method of prayer. She writes:

“Gaze upon him.                    *Intuere* = focus and pay attention and focus your gaze on the suffering Christ.

Contemplate him;                *Considera* = Consider and try to understand the mystery upon which you are reflecting. Lose yourself in contemplating him.

Clare often uses **the image of a mirror**. This was popular image for spiritual writers at that time. Think, for example, of the work called *The Mirror of Perfection*. However, Clare adds significantly to it by developing its Christological and feminine qualities.

“That Mirror suspended on the wood of the cross,” as she refers to Christ, reflected two images: that of the splendour of eternal glory, the transcendent Lord; and that of those creatures who looked upon it. Focussing our gaze upon Christ, therefore, enables us to perceive the Father and, at the same time, to see a reflection of what we are called to be, reflections of His Son.

Clare goes further than suggesting the mirror as an image of Christ; she deliberately offers it as a means of growing in a likeness of Him.

“Gaze upon that mirror each day, O Queen and Spouse of Jesus Christ,” Clare encourages Agnes, “and continually study your face within it, that you may adorn yourself within and without with beautiful robes...” It is a marvellous, down-to-earth piece of feminine advice. Although many had taken a mirror as a starting point of their reflections on the spiritual life, no one had developed it so speculatively and practically as Clare. She give us, therefore, her profound insights into a way of prayer that flows naturally into everyday life.

Thus, the image of Christ is developed in a marvellously contemplative and feminine way through the concept of the mirror.

***Desire to imitate him.***

- She pursued an authentic Gospel poverty and an understanding of the Gospel revelation of the Trinity. This provided a pattern of daily life for her and her sisters.
- Clare’s focus on poverty (nothing of one’s own) helped her enter more deeply into prayer. (the mystery of God and his Kingdom) But more than simply seeing poverty as a means, or an aid to deepening the life of prayer, Clare sees it flowing naturally from the contemplative gazing upon the mystery of Christ.

- When we look at the writings of Clare, we see how her *Testament* stands out in revealing her profound love of poverty and her desire to preserve it as the foundation of the life of the Clares. Her *Testament* focuses on her relationship with God, the “Father of mercies” who accomplishes every good: mercy, love, grace leading to gratitude.
- The “poor Christ” is the centre of her attention and the primary inspiration for her poverty. She writes to Agnes, “Embrace the poor Christ.” This concept led her to trust in the goodness and generosity of people and linked poverty with fraternity. Growth in one enhances the growth of the other - “sine proprio” made Clare more sensitive to others. Note the severity of her poverty as expressed in her Rule. Clare repeatedly points to Francis as guiding her and her sisters in understanding the meaning of poverty.
- Clare understood the role of poverty in the life and mission of the Church. She describes her efforts to obtain papal approval for her way of life and the protection, in particular, of the “privilege of poverty.”

### Conclusion

As we have seen, Clare’s attention is largely directed to “the Son of God [who] has been made for us the Way” to the Father and, as such, is the primary inspiration of her life. Once again, we see in her *Testament*, Clare’s awareness that Christ continually teaches us the wonder of the Father’s love, the ways of simplicity, poverty and humility that make us more receptive of that love, and the “incomparable treasure” and “joys of redemption” that flow from it.

In her poverty, Clare came to a greater sensitivity to the workings of the Spirit of the Lord in the unfolding of the Gospel life. The Holy Spirit played a central role in her life. She recognizes this as she repeats the phrase she learnt from St Francis: “the Spirit of the Lord and its holy manner of working” in the lives of the sisters.

To understand San Damiano and its spirituality, one must understand the deep, intense relationship the sisters had with Christ. Their lives were a clear expression of the Gospel of love. The Rule of Hugolino failed in two important aspects of Franciscan life:

- i. Gospel poverty;
- ii. The Sisters’ dependence on the Friars

Clare struggled for these two goals all her life. We can note about Clare that she was the first woman to write a Rule. After 40 years of living her form of life, she understood her goals more clearly.

The temptation is to interpret Clare’s Rule in the light of Francis’ Rule. Though Clare borrowed ideas from Francis, her expression was innovative in that she began a new form of monastic life for women that had never been experienced before.

It is said that Francis offers us a meditation on the Gospel of John, but Clare offers us a meditation on the theology of the Kingdom in St Matthew, especially on the aspect of poverty.

### **Review of Part One of Unit Four**

Here are some questions to review this section:

#### **Spirituality in General**

- What do you think that Franciscan Spirituality is all about?
- How would you explain why there are so many different spiritualities? E.g. Dominican, Ignatian, Cistercian, Franciscan, etc.

#### **Francis' Experience of God**

- How do you think Francis' experience of God can help us to live better Franciscan lives?
- How did Francis learn about God? How did his approach differ from others of his day?

#### **Christocentric Spirituality**

- How would you explain the Christ-centred approach of Franciscan Spirituality? What are some aspects of this?
- What three aspects or "symbolic moments" does Franciscan Spirituality dwell on most? Why were these "moments" so precious to Francis and Clare?
- Why do you think the Eucharist plays such a large role in the life of Francis and all Franciscans?

#### **Universal Fatherhood/Brother/Sisterhood**

- What do we mean by the terms "Universal Fatherhood of God" and "Universal Brotherhood/Sisterhood of all Creatures"?
- How would one express this brother/sisterhood in one's daily life today?

#### **Clarian Spirituality**

- What are the key themes in Clare's approach to Franciscan spirituality? Explain each of these.

#### **Notes:**

[1] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 1982 (adapted)

[2] Cf. Wroblewski & Karecki, op. cit. "*Franciscan Spirituality*", vol. 1, (adapted)

[3] *ibid.*

[4] Cf. Lombardi, ofm *Introduction to the Study of Franciscanism*, 1993 (adapted)

[5] Cf. The Catholic Encyclopaedia, vol. 6 "Francis of Assisi", p.31

[6] Wroblowski & Karecki, op. cit.

[7] Lombardi, op. cit. (“*and Clare*” is my addition)

[8] Bodo, ofm Murray, *A Mosaic of Francis – making his way our own*, St Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio (audio tapes)

[9] Cf. Alfonso Pompei, “*Dio, Trinità, Signore*” in *Dizionario francescano* (adapted)

[10] Cf. Catholic Encyclopaedia, vol. 6 “Franciscan Spirituality”, pp. 36ff.

[11] Cf. Pompei, A. Op. Cit. Loc. Cit.

[12] Cf. Micó OFM Cap Julio, “*Francis’ Image of God*” in *Greyfriars Revoew*, vol. 7, no. 2, 1993, pp.129ff.

[13] Cf. Julio Micó, OFM Cap op. cit. p.130

[14] *ibid.*

[15] *ibid.* p. 131

[16] You can still see today many examples of the art that Francis saw in Assisi if you should visit his home town. The San Damiano crucifix is a good example of art containing a number of lessons.

[17] Translation from Armstrong, OFM Cap, *Regis Francis & Clare*, pp.99f.

[18] See 2 Cel 9

[19] LM 1, Francis the Founder, p. 530

[20] Cf. Julio Micó, OFM Cap op.cit.

[21] Pompei, A op. cit.

[22] Adapted from: Fuellenbach, J., *Throw Fire*, Logos (Divine Word) Publications, Inc., Manila, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 2000, pp.40f

[23] Cf. Pompei, Alphonso, in *Dizionario francescano*, under “Povertà”.

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

[25] Cf. Lombardi, ofm *Introduction to the Study of Franciscanism*, 1991

[26] Cf. Francis of Assisi, *The Founder, Celano “The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul” nn.85ff.*

[27] Cf. Cesario van Hulst, “Natale” in *Dizionario francescano*, op. Cit.

[28] Cf. 1 Cel XXX, pp. 254ff. in Francis of Assisi, *The Saint*, vol. I (adapted)

[29] Cf. Pompei, Alfonso, “*Jesus Christ*” in *Dizionario francescano*, op. Cit.

[30] Cf. A. McDevitt, “*Franciscan Spirituality*” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 6, p.37.

[31] Cf. Falsini, Rinaldo “*Eucharistia*” in *Dizionario francescano*

[32] *ibid.*

[33] The adverb ‘corporally’ was used in the 12<sup>th</sup> century to mean Christ is present in his body analogously to his historical presence with no reference to visibility but in opposition to the suspect term ‘spiritual’; thus in place of the term ‘consecrate’ he uses the word ‘sanctify’ the body and blood of Christ.

[34] Falsini, op. cit.

[35] L Ord n. 12

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

[37] Cf. Unit 4, Part 2, pp.143ff.

[38] For more details on the Canticle of the Creatures, see Appendix 11

[39] adapted from Leonard Foley, OFM *Saint of the Day*, St Anthony Messenger Press, 2001

[40] 2 Cel 172 in *St Francis the Founder*, op. cit.

[41] Boni, Andrea, op. cit.

[42] Ryan, *Living the Vows* (adapted)

[43] 1 Cel 19

[44] Both titles are used. Francis himself called it the “Canticle of the Sun”.

[45] For an analysis, history of the Canticle see **Appendix 4**

[46] Cf. Armstrong, ofm Cap, Regis, *Francis and Clare*, op. cit. p. 39

[47] Some give the date as 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1212

[48] Test CI 11 – 13

[49] Cf. Cremaschi, Chiara Giovanna, “Le povere dame” in *Dizionario francescano*, op. cit.

[50] Cf. Gregory IX, the Papal Bull *Solet annuere*

[51] Cf. Miller R & Peterson I, *Praying with Clare of Assisi*, St Mary’s Press, Christian Brothers Publications, Minnesota, 2002, Introduction, p. 27

[52] 1 L Ag 15

[53] Miller & Peterson, op. cit. p. 28

[54] Cf. Cremaschi, ibid.

[55] 1 Cel 19 in *St Francis, the Saint*, vol 1, p. 198

[56] Cf. Armstrong, R, Early Documents, p. 189

[57] Cf. Ledoux, Claire Marie, *Clare – Her Spirituality revealed in her Letters*, St Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1996

[58] Cf. Armstrong, ofm Cap, R *Clare of Assisi – Early Documents*, Introduction, pp. 2ff

[59] ibid., p. 19 (adapted)