



5. 1982 Commentary of TOR Rule

IV. Life in Chastity for the Sake of the Reign of God

14. **L**et the brothers and sisters keep in mind how great a dignity God has given them because God created them and formed them in the image of the beloved Son according to the flesh and in God's own likeness according to the Spirit (Adm 5:1; Col 1:16). Since they are created through Christ and in Christ, they have chosen this form of life which is founded on the words and example of our Redeemer.

15. Professing chastity for the sake of the reign of God (Mt 19:12), they are to care for the things of the Lord (1 Co 7:32) and they seek nothing else except to follow the will of God and to please God (ER 22:9). In all of their works charity toward God and all people should shine forth.

16. They are to remember that they have been called by a special gift of grace to manifest in their lives that wonderful mystery by which the Church is joined to Christ her divine spouse (cf Eph 5:23-26).

17. Let them keep the example of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, ever before their eyes. Let them do this according to the mandate of Blessed Francis who held Holy Mary, Lady and Queen, in highest veneration, since she is the virgin made church (SalBMV1). Let them also remember that the Immaculate Virgin Mary whose example they are to follow called herself the handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38).

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TAB 5

Commentary on the 1982 TOR Rule



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“The Rule and Life of
the Brothers and Sisters of
the Third Order Regular of St. Francis”
(Original Commentary)

Study Guide:
“Key Concepts of the Third Order Regular Rule”
Joanne Brazinski OSF, Nancy Celaschi OSF,
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**THE RULE AND LIFE OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF ST. FRANCIS AND COMMENTARY**

FRANCISCAN FEDERATION, 1982

**THE BEGINNING OF THE RULE AND LIFE OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF ST. FRANCIS**

Since the fifteenth century the name of our Order, the largest in the Catholic Church with more than 116,000 members in more than four hundred congregations and institutes, has been the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

Even though the canonically approved title dates to the fifteenth century, the designation of “Third Order” can be traced to the earliest biographies of Francis. Francis’s early chroniclers eagerly relate the wisdom that prompted him to point out three distinct patterns of Gospel life. Inspired by God and influenced by the circumstances of his time, Francis was capable of expanding his *forma vitae* to allow for different emphases given to fundamental Gospel values in different styles of Gospel living.

Francis combined zeal for preaching the saving word of the Gospel with an inclusive vision that left room for every person of good will to share his inspiration concerning the mystery of salvation. The fruit of this flexibility and zeal can be seen today in the multiplicity of congregations that have made their home in the Third Order Regular.

The distinctions that exist among the Three Franciscan Orders are not distinctions implying difference in status but differences of emphases in the spirituality and mission of each Order. Together we comprise one worldwide family, inspired by the Gospel spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

WORDS OF SAINT FRANCIS TO HIS FOLLOWERS¹

The origin of the ancient Third Order was in the penitential movement that pre-dated St. Francis by six hundred years. Members of this movement committed themselves to a life of continual conversion to Gospel ideals by a program of public and private acts of prayer and penance.

¹ILtF 1-19; FA:ED I, 41-42.

Some secluded themselves in hermitages while others remained in secular occupations or associated themselves with a specific church or monastic house. Francis himself expressed his early experience at conversion by adopting these practices.

When his first followers were asked for an explanation of identity, they called themselves the “penitents of Assisi.” When the Pope approved the Rule of the Friars Minor in 1209, Francis and his followers ceased being penitents canonically. Francis and the friars did, however, continue to minister to and influence the penitents of their day. When these medieval *conversi* (converted ones) asked for specific spiritual direction from Francis, he offered guidelines. These became the foundation of the third form of Franciscan Gospel life, the Third Order. Citations from the sources on this point include: 1C XV:37; AP 19; 1LtF and 2LtF; LM 4:6-7; L3C VIII:27, X:36, and 37; LPer 34; and ER XXIII:7. The earliest (circa 1215) authenticated writings of St. Francis for the penitents is technically called the *First Version of the Letter to the Faithful*.

The prologue to this Rule text is the first part of that *Letter*. It was chosen to remind us that our origins go directly back to Francis himself and to enable us to reflect often on his specific words to the penitents who wished to follow Christ after his example.

The Third Order Regular began to be formed within the lifetime of St. Francis. Franciscan lay penitents began living in community, professing vows – the canonical definition of religious – and performing works of charity. Many of our particular founders and foundresses wanted to “follow Christ after the example of St. Francis” and can rightly be called latter-day penitents who wished to incarnate one of several aspects of Franciscan Gospel life. Many, too, were lay Franciscans before becoming religious. The Secular Franciscan Order stems from the same roots as our Third Order Regular. The Rule approved by Paul VI for the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) also has this *Letter* as its prologue. Thus, its placement within our revised Rule further serves to express our common origin and affinity with our secular Franciscan brothers and sisters.

CHAPTER I: OUR IDENTITY

At the outset (and throughout) it should be noted that this is a spiritual document containing values, attitudes and principles necessary for a way of life. The opening words of the text, *Forma vitae* (the “form,” or “style of life”) do not mean regulations (which belong in Constitutions or directories), but a clear, brief, and fundamental statement of

principles projected by Francis to his followers about our way of living “according to the Gospel.”

Using the Church’s criteria *Lumen Gentium* 45 and *Perfectae Caritatis* 2 for discerning anew the basic values of a particular order,² those responsible for developing this text formed it around four values: penance, (biblical *metanoia*), contemplative prayer, poverty, and minority (humility). Other values associated with our Order: simplicity, joy, works of mercy and the pursuit of peace through justice, are all manifestations of these fundamental values. Fraternity/community is regarded not as a value, but as the social reality of committed relationships in which we live out our Gospel witness.

The text is largely in the words of Francis as the citations indicate.³ The Rule of 1221 and the first part of the Testament provide a foundation for the sequence of ideas. We are Franciscans following Francis’s style of Gospel life. We are Franciscans who claim to follow the Gospel spirit of Francis as he first shared it with the townspeople of Assisi. The specific charism of our Third Order is continuous conversion.

ARTICLE 1

In summary Article 1 states:

- a. This is a spiritual document about our
- b. Identity and life which is centered in
- c. Observing the Gospel. It notes that we are
- d. Franciscan, followers of Francis’s third form of Gospel living,
as well as
- e. Religious who profess the Church’s
- f. Canonical vows.

ARTICLE 2

Characteristic of Franciscan Third Order Regular spirituality is its emphasis that turning to God and being conformed to Christ is never accomplished once for all. These are ongoing religious experiences. To be faithful to the Gospel, as Francis’s experience shows, we have to do

²Austin Flannery, ed. “Lumen Gentium,” *Vatican II: The Counciliar and Post Counciliar Documents* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975), 406; “Perfectae Caritatis,” 612-613.

³Complementary citations from the writings of St. Clare are added in italics.

penance always.⁴ This *second* article notes the centrality of *metanoia* in our Order's spirituality. It is the root value of our tradition and flowers forth in poverty, minority and contemplation. *This article, therefore, is the charism statement of the Third Order Regular.*

Francis's own words are used to explain *metanoia*, or biblical penance. Unfortunately, today many misunderstand even Francis's use of *in vera fide et poenitentia, in true faith and in penance*. Since this is so, Francis' words from both the Rules of 1221 and 1223 are employed. According to Francis, *metanoia/poenitentia* as a style of Gospel life has three basic elements:⁵

a. To acknowledge God – in creation, in the word of Scripture, in the manifest goodness of God, and especially in the words, life, deeds, and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what persevering in true faith means. To persevere further implies:

b. To adore God – concretely with one's whole life by living prayerfully, in a childlike way, with purity of heart, in poverty and in loving obedience which impels the true Gospel person, and

c. To serve God – in one's neighbor by service in charity and "action on behalf of justice" in the promotion of peace (Mt 25:34).

From this rootedness in "evangelical conversion" the fruits of contemplation, poverty and minority grow. The remainder of this Rule becomes an exposition of this dynamic convergence in the life of the Franciscan penitent.

ARTICLE 3

Article 3 begins by expanding that part of Article 2 that concerns *vera fide*. The Church is the guardian and teacher of the truth of Revelation. In this light, fidelity to the Church becomes one of the ways to "persevere in true faith." Specifically, this article refers to fidelity to the leaders of the Church: the pope and the bishops. We are to be of service by living our Gospel life as a witness within the Church, as well as by announcing "penance and peace" to all. This article calls us to a deep unity within the universal Church, our local churches, and especially within our own communities or fraternities which should be microcosms of the Church itself. We are called to be turned totally to God and to manifest this by living the Gospel intensely after the example of St. Francis.

The place where we are to do this primarily is within our own fraternity/community. Like the Church, our congregations need structure

⁴Test 1-26; FA:ED I, 124-126.

⁵ER XXIII; FA:ED I, 81-86.

and leadership. Obedience to our ministers becomes another sign of this fidelity. Of equal importance is our reverence for each other. Since we are all spiritual daughters and sons, we actively promote harmony with all branches of our vast Franciscan family.

Summary Note: In Article 1, the phrase “living in obedience” comes first because this expressed the new style of religious life that Francis envisioned. Entrance into religious life was no longer entrance into a monastery, but reception into the common bond of obedience to shared beliefs and inspiration by all members. Obedience is to faith, to Christ, to the Gospel, to the Church, to the minister, to one another. This obedience is never arbitrary, however, but mediated through the Church, the Rule and our constitutions. This comes up again in Article 7. Today we rightly object to a solely canonical notion of obedience obeying legitimate commands, which fail to understand the all-embracing nature of obedience in the thought of Francis. His notion is much larger than the limited, sometimes legalistic notion of the vow. This again points to the necessity of reading this text as a spiritual document, that is as maximal, rather than as a legal or minimalistic text.

CHAPTER II: ACCEPTANCE INTO THIS LIFE

ARTICLE 4

This chapter considers formation and the ongoing process of *metanoia*. It should be noted that all four fundamental values (conversion, prayer, poverty and minority) of our Franciscan Life will now begin to appear in each chapter. Each chapter may refer to specific values, but because Gospel life is one, all four constitute the fabric of the Rule text in each of its parts. Although this chapter obviously deals with formation, a closer look reveals that the understanding of formation is of a process that extends throughout life. Such an integrated concept of formation has been the subject of much study and encouragement in recent years.

In Francis’s and Clare’s own experience, conversion was the result of God’s inspiration (Art. 4). Therefore, according to them, an aspirant wishing to follow this Gospel way of life must be inspired by the Spirit. *Metanoia* is manifested in our tradition of Franciscanism by living the Gospel literally after the example of St. Francis and St. Clare through poverty (Art. 5), humble service (Art. 7), and prayerfulness (Art. 8). And this commitment and consecration is a life-long process and experience (Art. 6).

ARTICLE 5

More specifically, Articles 4, 5, and 6 reflect Francis's initial conversion experience as much as they reflect his instruction about formation. For Francis, it is essential that one be convinced that his or her call is from God. This implies discernment carried out through dialogue between the individual and representatives of the community. The minister is to ascertain that the one called is "truly Catholic" and genuinely faithful to the Church. The candidate is to be initiated into the life of the community/fraternity. This statement is the text's first explicit reference to the essentially formative character of Franciscan living and ongoing conversion. As Francis and Clare experienced and reflected in their Testaments, the textbook of our religious formation is the Gospel. The Gospel is explained to candidates, especially those parts that express radical and complete self-giving to God. For Clare and Francis divesting self of all that could hinder total conversion is requisite for the journey in Christ's footprints.

ARTICLE 6

This article is among the most direct in the Rule Text. It is addressed to the novice. "Let them begin...." It is addressed to all: "Let them begin...." The continuous life of penance is always begun anew. It is our ongoing religious commitment. That is why the word "consecration" is used in the second sentence. With Francis, everything must be concrete, not ideal. Therefore, our surrender to God is manifested by giving possessions to God's poor people (Art. 5). If one begins and pursues a life of evangelical conversion, then the simplicity of Christ's life should characterize the Franciscan's total living, beginning with the very clothes on one's back. Conversion to God implies being counter-cultural. To be such is not merely a matter of clothing but of one's entire lifestyle.

The wording for this article was carefully discussed in view of the issue of religious habit. The general admonition to "clothe themselves plainly" was selected because this article must be flexible enough to apply to men's and women's communities; groups of contemplatives or ministerial life; communities of widely varying histories and customs, and communities working where the political situation renders the wearing of a habit impossible. Nevertheless, the tradition of the Order to always manifest a penitential life by dressing in a way that is counter-cultural is preserved.

ARTICLE 7

This article refers to life profession and the attitudes Francis says are necessary once one has begun a life of penance. The expression "to be received into obedience" has special meaning. It means profession into a

type of religious life that is not monastic. Instead of commitment to stability of place, one is bound to a familial relationship with others equally committed to total conversion and the observance of the holy Gospel. The living link for all in the fraternity/community is the minister whom all are to obey and who is to encourage the others to do "...all they have promised the Lord to observe..." (Art. 26). Mutual responsibility for our Gospel living and for one another is a principle found in Clare and Francis's writings.

The fundamental attitudes and evangelical values of poverty and minority (second sentence) are presented by Francis as characteristics that we should develop in our ongoing observance of "this life and Rule." They will be treated in subsequent chapters. Directed by obedience and freed of attachment by poverty, we are thrust towards a chaste union with the person of Christ. This summation of vowed consecration leads to the final article of the chapter.

ARTICLE 8

Our turning to God is to be so complete that nothing less than union with God in Christ through the Spirit is to be our life's objective. The article likewise indicates that being filled with God's life and love is to be continually manifested by love for neighbor. Doing the works of mercy – the "fruits befitting our repentance," as Francis would say – has been the constant tradition of the congregations and institutes of our Order.

Summary Note: Article 5's second sentence is a translation of the sense of the phrase *si illi idonei sint*.⁶ In Article 7 *finito vero tempore probationis*⁷ likewise is translated in the sense intended for today. The last line's *mundo corde et pura mente* is also translated according to the intended sense. It could be translated literally, but this and similar phrases are frequently found in this text. To avoid repetition and to be more specific in English, other words than the literal translations are used.

CHAPTER III: THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

From the exhortation to make ourselves a dwelling place for the Trinity, we move to this third chapter that summarizes key elements of prayer in the Franciscan tradition. We know that neither Clare nor Francis offered a complicated prayer method. They call their followers to prayer with a decidedly contemplative dimension – to be present to God who is

⁶Literally translated "if they are suitable."

⁷Literally translated "the time of probation truly having been completed."

present to all creatures is prayer. They require that our prayer be Trinitarian. Our prayer is always addressed to God in the Son by the power of the Spirit.⁸ Our prayer is to be Incarnational. We become alive to God's deeds in the greatest gift of God, the Incarnation, in which God becomes one with us in the Son. The purpose of all Franciscan Prayer, then, is to give God ceaseless praise and thanksgiving for all God has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Christ.

ARTICLE 9

Prayer is a way of life for us – all the time and everywhere. We should be so filled with God that adoration flows from the depth of our inner life (*puro corde*) with joy and thanksgiving. We should want nothing else (*et non deficere*) because our God wills to be one with us. This is the holiness to which we are called. Our every day should thus be sanctified. In Francis's time, this sanctification of the day was given clear expression in the Divine Office. This is still the Church's understanding of the Liturgy of the Hours. We pray with the Son in his Mystical Body celebrating God's gift of salvation throughout the day. Today, as the "General Instruction," for the Liturgy of the Hours notes, it is also the intercessory prayer for the Church and the world. It becomes for us both a turning to God and to our neighbor. For Francis, praying the Office is also a sign of fidelity to the Church's tradition of daily praise and intercession.

The second paragraph of this article addresses the many congregations within our Order of specifically contemplative life. All of us are called to contemplative prayer, but we are strengthened and enriched by the brothers and sisters who embrace the life of intercession and adoration in an exclusive way. Their lives within our Third Order Regular family witness to the diversity supported by our common charism.

ARTICLE 10

The motivation for our life of ceaseless prayer is described. Francis's love for creation and his insight into its meaning is central. Notice that we praise "with" all creatures. The created world is the expression of God's goodness and the theater of God's redemptive love for us. Because we are made in God's image, it is possible for us to seek union with God as we do God's will. Thus, the Franciscan does not flee the world in order to "escape" to God, but seeks immersion in its sacramental reality.

⁸Francis's dictated paraphrase of the "Our Father."

ARTICLE 11

In Celano's *First Life*, we see Francis given over to "persistent meditation" and "penetrating consideration" of the Scriptures.⁹ Like Francis, we seek "spirit and life" in the words of the Gospel.

ARTICLE 12

Francis calls for "humility and reverence" as dispositions for receiving the Eucharist. After the Fourth Lateran Council, Francis and the friars played a crucial role in helping to reform Eucharistic theology and devotion. As we study this text, we remember that our understanding of "humility and reverence" is deepened to include the renewed meaning of the communitarian dimensions of the Eucharist given by the Council of our day, Vatican II. "Participation" then, becomes the by-word of renewed and reformed Eucharistic theology and practice among us.

This article cites two other traits – often translated into specific "devotions" – associated with Franciscans and, indeed, with every reform movement in the Western Church. These are reverence for the holy and saving name of Jesus and respect for the sacred character of the words of the Gospels. For Francis, such respect is a sign of conversion and our readiness to put God's word into effect. Jesus continues his saving work (the meaning of his messianic titles) through the power of his presence in the Gospels and the Eucharist.

ARTICLE 13

Here we find the second meaning of *poenitentia* in the writings of Francis; that is, contrition (Art. 2). The article portrays the reality of human weakness and our need for help in making our way to God. We must embody the life of grace in practical ways.

Repentance is both interior and exterior and is marked by authenticity when it produces deeds befitting true contrition. Fasting is one of those deeds.

Fasting can be regarded in both the literal and symbolic senses. It is a way to make ourselves literally experience in our bodies the need for God. It is God-oriented, a means to express conversion. Symbolically, fasting means to free ourselves from whatever clutters up our lives. This is why simplicity is mentioned here and followed by minority (humility), which will be considered more fully in the next chapter.

The words "especially before God" are intended to draw us to the famous statement of Admonition 19: "What one is before God, that one is

⁹IC XXX:84; FA:ED I, 254-255.

and no more.”¹⁰ We may fool others, but never God. Our penitence must be honest, without affectation.

The article closes by inviting us to contemplate the Paschal Mystery. Through Christ we have access to God despite our sinfulness. The height of Franciscan contemplation is this transformation into Jesus Christ “who chose to be crucified because of the excess of his love”¹¹ for us.

CHAPTER IV: THE LIFE OF CHASTITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM

ARTICLE 14

Drawing upon the insight expressed in Article 10 – namely, that the material universe is good – the call to a life of chastity is described as a preferential love for Christ. This love does not negate the potential of human development. Rather the whole of a man or woman’s life is gathered into this consecration of the person’s innermost self to the Lord.

This article situates chastity in the overall context of Gospel living and roots it in the wonder Francis experienced when contemplating women and men in God’s plan for creation and redemption.

ARTICLE 15

This article specifies the preceding one by relating attitudes Francis had regarding chastity for the sake of the Kingdom. This gift is intimately related to poverty that frees us by protecting the growth of the Word within our lives from the choking thorns and rocks of temporal cares. This chastity is not a privatized aspect of religious vocation, but empowers us to witness to God’s primacy in practical visible ways, especially charity towards our neighbor.

ARTICLE 16

Here we find an exhortation reflecting the passages in the *Letters to the Faithful* in which Francis compares the love of the disciple to the love of a spouse. Such nuptial imagery has a venerable tradition that includes Scripture, the early Church Fathers and the mystics – including Francis, Clare, Bonaventure and numerous other Franciscan saints. This is a powerful image, which invites us to confidently expect the grace of deep personal union with our God.

¹⁰Adm XIX:2, FA:ED I, 135.

¹¹LMj 13:3; FA:ED II, 632.

ARTICLE 17

Mary is *par excellence*, the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and the Mother of the Church. In her *Magnificat* we find summarized all of the longing hope of the *anawim*, God's poor little ones, whose hope rested solely upon God's power to satisfy, deliver, and console them. For that reason we look to Mary as the exemplar of reliance upon the God's power and loving concern for others' needs.

CHAPTER V: THE WAY TO SERVE AND WORK

There are three historic reasons why minority, the subject of this chapter, developed into a principal characteristic for the Order of Friars Minor. They were: the clericalization of the Order; Francis's inspiration based on Gospel reflection; and the socio-political situation of Assisi in the saint's day. Francis wanted his brothers and sisters always to be *minores* in contrast to the *majores* (the wealthy and powerful) of his day. He wanted them to be like Christ, humble and truly submissive to all. And he wished his friars to be servants of the Word rather than set apart as a clerical class or hierarchical monastic community.

If minority can be historically verified as a central feature of the life of the Friars Minor, in what sense is it appropriate as a value fundamental to the life of the Third Order Regular? While we share the meaning of this value with the Friars Minor, we find added meaning in our tradition. Intrinsic to the life of penance are the works of mercy. Our turning to God is only authentic, as the Johannine literature in Scripture points out, when it is manifested by love for neighbor (1 John 4:20). The life of conversion is ongoing because it is growing adherence to the God of love. The experience of *metanoia*, therefore, projects one into the ongoing and daily reality of God's little ones, the marginal, the helpless and the unwanted. Like St. Francis who concretely expressed his experience of conversion by embracing a leper, by caring for the poor, by attending the sick and suffering, and by calling God's people to peace, so, too, have congregations in the Third Order Regular continually committed themselves to the works of charity. Congregations founded during the past two centuries particularly have had the works of charity as their apostolic purpose. This is the context in which Third Order congregations have come to appreciate minority.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46 explain minority's importance. It is the least who are the object of the Lord's loving concern. Jesus identifies himself with the "least" (Mt 25:40). Minority means to conform oneself, through a life of penance, to Christ who is the servant of God sent into the world, the place of our redemption. It is the "holy

ground” where we live God’s redeeming will with our brothers and sisters. Minority means cherishing life as sisters and brothers, bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom to captives, giving sight to the blind, setting the down-trodden free and announcing God’s year of favor (Lk 4: 17-19). *Metanoia* and Jesus’ announcement of the nearness of the Kingdom (Mk 1:15) are inextricably linked because childlikeness, minority, is the one thing necessary for entrance into the Kingdom (Mt 18:13; Mk 10:16; Lk 18:17; Jn 3). An aspect of Francis’s insight into the Gospel was that all the other qualities of Gospel life are counsels. “Littleness” is an absolute requirement for the Kingdom (Mt 19:14). The adult experience of this “littleness,” or “childlikeness,” before God is the joyful awareness that one is the subject of the pure love and favor of God. Is this anything other than the basic awareness and attitude needed throughout life for total and continuous conversion?

This chapter considers those attitudes Francis projects, since reception “into obedience” (Art. 1 and 7) brings us into a form of life, which, unlike monasticism, is at once immersed in the world and yet stands against it. Francis is concerned that we commit ourselves to actual identity with the *minores*, the poor and powerless. In his day, they had to work and had to serve the *majores*. That explains the language of the three articles of this Chapter. But more importantly, the constant tradition of our Order and the continuing current teaching of the Church call us to this posture. As Third Order Franciscans we are called to live as brothers and sisters with all people, especially with the poor, the marginalized and those who are without voice in our world.

ARTICLE 18 AND ARTICLE 19

In Article 13, we gazed upon the poor crucified Christ. In Article 17, we looked to Mary, the lowly servant who is lifted up by God. With such models before our eyes we seek to enter into the meaning of minority for our lives.

If we walk in Christ’s footsteps, we will be actually poor: *sicut pauperes*. As all poor people must, we work and serve as God gives the talent, but we do not work ourselves to death. (“Let them avoid that idleness...”) This was stated so as to indicate that there is a legitimate form of “idleness,” that which allows for leisure and contemplation. Francis’ balanced view of the relationship between prayer and work is spelled out in view of our contemporary tendency to “workaholism” and the “heresy of good works.”

Let us summarize several aspects of work that Francis offers and which these articles try to encompass:

- a. Work is a way we identify with the poor;

- b. We willingly do manual labor;
- c. By our works, we give good example;
- d. We work to provide for each other, our ministries, and ourselves;
- e. Whatever we have beyond our needs we give to other people;
- f. We work to avoid idleness;
- g. We never work in ways that snuff out prayerfulness;
- h. We do not work to accumulate wealth.

Finally, since we want to have the mind of Christ (Phil 2:5-12), our self-perception is one of servanthood. Francis concretized the ideal into an attitude. We should not seek to be “over” others by domination or manipulation. Rather, he urges us to be filled with peace to announce it “by word and example”¹² and to do so joyfully.

ARTICLE 20

This is the positive aspect of the final point made in Article 19. When we enter into association with people for any reason, we seek to exhibit qualities proclaimed by Christ in the Beatitudes. Because of our respectful attitude, Francis warns that we should not judge others even if they appear untouched by the Gospel.¹³ They are touched, however, by our witness to joyfulness in God. This alone makes our peaceable greeting credible (Article 30).

TRANSLATION NOTES

The sense of *laborandi* in Article 18 is “manual labor.” *Laboris* in Article 19 is intended to mean any form of work or service. In Article 20 the sense of *sicut decet* is “in accord with their vocation,” literally it means, “as becomes them.”

CHAPTER VI: THE LIFE OF POVERTY

This chapter considers the value of evangelical poverty as Francis and Clare taught it and the attitudes that would manifest a person’s assimilation of this “treasure.” To turn to God continuously means to put on Christ, to walk in Christ’s footprints. That we can do so is the good news. For Clare and Francis the word of this Good News could only be made flesh in the same way in which the Eternal Word became flesh – by

¹²Adm VII:4; FA:ED I, 132.

¹³LR II:17; FA:ED I, 101.

choosing poverty and life among the poor. Evangelical poverty has both personal and social dimensions. They translate their personal surrender to Jesus into an insistence upon material poverty in order to mirror faithfully the One who has nowhere to lay his head.

As an attitude of heart, poverty is the admission of our powerlessness to save ourselves and the acknowledgment in faith that God wills our salvation. It is absolutely necessary to the life of conversion. God is totally good and sent Jesus, the Incarnate Word, among us to hand back all humanity, all creation in fact, to a loving God. To recognize God's "all good" self-sufficiency and our creaturely need for God is the basis in faith for evangelical poverty. Francis would have us live this acknowledgement and never appropriate what is properly God's.¹⁴ We own only our limitations and our sinfulness.¹⁵ Positively, evangelical poverty calls us to be totally open only to the divine riches.

Evangelical poverty, or poverty of spirit, equally means actual material poverty. As such, poverty becomes the condition that best preserves us in the state of total dependence on God. Material poverty is the sign of our uncluttered and converted selves. It further associates us with those who have always been closest to the Lord, the helpless poor to whom the good news is proclaimed. For Francis and Clare all these aspects of poverty constitute "Evangelical poverty."

ARTICLE 21

In the *Rule of 1221* and in his *Testament*, Francis gives us the reason why poverty is so central to our way of life. He does not define poverty. He simply and clearly points to Christ and says, "He is evangelical poverty," Christ is our way to God. And he chose humility (minority) as the way for humanity to be turned anew to God. Jesus emptied himself and became poor for our salvation (*kenosis*). We choose the poverty of Christ to receive salvation. This self-emptying is the process involved in Franciscan poverty. It implies total dependence on Providence. This poverty is safeguarded by identification with the poor. In the Third Order Regular tradition, this has most often been expressed by "deeds befitting our conversion," or doing the works of mercy.

Mary is mentioned in this article deliberately because it is in the context of Christ's saving activity that Franciscan Marian devotion is centered. The words "Crib and Cross" capture the essence of this devotion.¹⁶

The phrase about money expressed Francis's thought on the danger of the destructive force of greed. Money was not to be touched because

¹⁴Adm II:1-5; FA:ED I, 129.

¹⁵Adm V:1-8; FA:ED I, 131.

¹⁶SalBVM; FA:ED I, 163; OfP 1 Antiphon; FA:ED I, 141.

of its misuse in thirteenth century commerce. For us the danger is not in physically handling money, which has become available to all classes, but in the acquisitive and competitive spirit it breeds. This is the sense of the phrase *et caveant multum a pecunia*. In his writing on work, Francis admonishes that no one work to accumulate wealth for the same reason.

ARTICLE 22

In this article Clare's and Francis's ideal of poverty is presented without risking the needless difficulties created when poverty is equated with rejection of any form of ownership. Canonical reality today is that as religious in simple vows, we do retain the right to own goods. Our concern, therefore, should be to foster freedom from attachment and proprietary instincts that cause us to live and act like the wealthy. The Gospel call to detachment is radical for Francis and Clare and embraces spiritual and intellectual as well as material goods. In Article 20, for instance, this highest form of poverty is advocated: be nonjudgmental! Judgment belongs to God. Christ in his humanity and humility did not judge us, but redeemed us. With that as the criterion, the wedding of evangelical poverty to our own personalities, shown in our attitudes toward persons, circumstances and things can be called nothing less than maximal. God's Providence, in this light, takes on a much deeper significance than mere provision or protection alone. Such was the radical poverty of Christ – the poverty Clare and Francis hold out to us.

CHAPTER VII: LOVE OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Before commenting on the content of this chapter, it is important to acknowledge that the translation and interpretation of this chapter and all of the articles that use the term *fraternitas* pose a very difficult problem for those of us who must translate the official Latin text into English. In the meetings in Germany, Belgium and Rome, attention was given to the problems that would be created for English speaking members of the Order who desire the use of inclusive language in our documents. Two facts emerged in the discussion on this difficulty. First, while the major European languages allow for translations of the terms that were not offensive to those participating in the dialogue on the Order, there is, as yet, no clear consensus about how to translate the term that speaks of a very important Franciscan value – fraternity. We acknowledge that more discussion is needed among the English-speaking members in view of the sensitivity we want to foster regarding the importance of non-sexist language. Until such dialogue can lead us to new horizons, however, we judge that, at this time, we should use in our translation the word literally and present to our membership the explanation of religious significance

that the idea of fraternity held for Francis and Clare, as it was developed in the composition of their Rules.

The significance of the word fraternity in the vocabulary of Clare and Francis is found in their insights that Jesus became brother to all of us in the Incarnation. Thus fraternity is a special descriptive word indicating a *relational commitment* rooted in our relationship to this elder Brother of ours. Since we are received into the obedience of this relationship, we are not bound to place (e.g., monastery). By the inspiration and power of the Spirit, our Gospel life means being ever open to a deeper relationship with God in Christ in whose footsteps we walk. Our loving service to each other and all creatures manifest this relationship. Our conversion, prayer, poverty and minority are enfolded in the fraternity/community where we experience our God giving us the power to love one another. We are talking about something more than a communal structure, school of discipline, or team approach to ministry. We are talking about a life lived in constant consciousness of the equality of our relationships rooted in our relationship to our Brother, Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE 23

What is the basis of our life together? God's love. This love incarnate is Jesus Christ. Following his example, we want to love our brothers and sisters by deeds. This love further must be made concrete, because we have chosen a literal living of the Gospel that makes us interdependent and servants to all.

Francis urges concrete expression of mutual trust. The sick and handicapped will experience love that values their human dignity over and above functional productivity. With the compassion for the sick that characterizes many of his writings, Francis challenges our standards of mutuality. The sick, in their turn, are admonished to search for God's will in the midst of suffering and to exemplify reliance upon God's care.

This article clearly shows Francis's realism. All is not ideal in our lives together. When relationships are weakened, we must repair them according to evangelical norms. This article notes the need for personal and shared responsibility for life together. The minister cannot be the sole agent of reconciliation. In addition to our call to be messengers of peace, we are warned of the corruptive force of pride and competitiveness. Righteousness undermines both poverty of spirit and love and so must be avoided.

ARTICLE 24

Here we consider our failures of being sisters and brothers to one another. If someone causes offense, our concrete attitude should be: mutual

forgiveness without accusation. We belong to one family; we originate in a single impulse of divine love.

CHAPTER VIII: THE OBEDIENCE OF LOVE

The Gospel of John provides us with a profound portrait of the obedience Jesus renders to his Abba/Father. Francis and Clare embraced this mysterious and powerful call to walk in the pathways of Jesus. The only way to be turned to God is in, with, and through Christ, the Way. The underlying attitude necessary for genuine conversion, then, is obedience, the obedience of Christ (Art. 2). As consecrated followers of Clare and Francis's project of Gospel conversion, we live as Christ did in poverty, minority and community/fraternity. And as we have consistently seen, they bring this ideal down to earth. The framework of evangelical obedience is the brotherhood or sisterhood. This is why this chapter is positioned here. Francis's form of life is characterized by obedience as much as by poverty because it is based on *metanoia*, the inspiration of the Lord given to each member to live the Gospel completely.¹⁷ To emphasize this, Francis's term for obedience is used in the title: *Obedientia caritativa*, the obedience of love.¹⁸ Its motive is that "God so loved the world..." (Jn 3:1-3; 4:7-21). It is both love for God and mutual love among ourselves.

It is also helpful to note that this chapter is not a description of the practice of the vow of obedience in the canonical or constitutional sense. Rather, it is an unfolding of Gospel obedience in fraternity/community from which the vowed commitment takes its ecclesial vitality.

ARTICLE 25

Franciscan obedience is self-emptying, therefore, its intrinsic relationship to poverty. As Christ did, we seek to conform our wills to the God who sends us. Francis projects this obedience to ministers and members alike. The will of God is our salvation. "For God" then, we conform our wills to the divine plan for humanity's redemption (Chapter 4). This involves witness and ministry for the sake of true justice. We are called to be credible signs of salvation (witness) as well as instruments of God's reconciliation (mission). Chapters, whether general, regional or local, are explicit structures intended to enable us to renew repeatedly our living and ministry. Notice again, the emphasis on shared responsibility. With such emphasis, the chapter is described as the first vehicle for rendering obedience. The third sentence stresses the poverty of obedience.

¹⁷LR X:1-12; FA:ED I, 105.

¹⁸Adm III:6; FA:ED I, 130.

Domination and manipulation represent willful possessiveness. There is no place for this in Franciscan life. Mutual service is what characterizes the obedience of Jesus.

ARTICLE 26 AND 27

These two articles should be taken as a unit. They concern the minister of the community/fraternity who has authority with reference to what all have promised the Lord. While the “limits” of obedience are defined (it is guided by the Rule and conscience), Franciscan tradition clearly affirms the role of the minister whose personal authority is meant to be of service to unity, reconciliation, and fidelity within the fraternity/community. Therefore, the minister is not to exercise authority as the powerful of the world do. This service is to be offered with humility, love, and kindness. In fact, the “servant-spirit” of the ministers should be evident to all especially those who seek help in being faithful to what they have professed.

ARTICLE 28

Here the relationship of poverty to obedience is translated into an admonition to all. No one is to appropriate or possess any office, ministry, assignment, or service. Presented here is the unmistakable call to continuous conversion present in all roles of authority in the Order.

TRANSLATION NOTE

In the second sentence of Article 27, note that *spiritualiter observare* does not mean, “spiritually observe,” but “observe according to its spirit.”

CHAPTER IX: APOSTOLIC LIFE

The sequence of the preceding chapters is based upon the plan Francis developed in the *Rule of 1221*. These chapters describe the foundation of our call, our special Franciscan identity, our rootedness in prayer, our internal relationships and our attitude of service. The poverty and obedience of Jesus invite us to single-hearted consecration to His love. The life thus fashioned will, of necessity, flow outward to others. By describing our interior lives and the life we live together in fraternity/community beforehand, we can now better understand the link between contemplation and action that should characterize our evangelical call to be peacemakers.

Since *metanoia* is our basic charism, its relationship to apostolic action should be seen as the cornerstone of our Franciscan evangelical spirituality. Turning to our neighbor presumes our turning to God. Francis

understands the activity of service as an extension of prayer. The citation here of the Great Commandment relates this to his early directives to the penitents in the opening passage of both *Letters to the Faithful*.¹⁹ We are called to go into the world (Chapter V) to give witness, first by our lives and then by our work, to the saving power and presence of God in this world. This ninth chapter then, is a culmination of all that precedes it.

ARTICLE 29

The opening sentence of this chapter re-echoes the magnificent theme that originates in the Book of Deuteronomy, the Shema, the “Great Commandment.” Jesus affirms this commandment as the cornerstone of human response to God’s revelation of covenanted love. Francis seized upon this insistence of the Lord and made this passage the opening mandate in his directives to the first members of our Order. In the *First Letter to the Faithful* he writes, “... and we give birth to Him through a holy life which should enlighten others because of our example.”²⁰ Again in the *Second Letter to the Faithful*, he relates, “worthy fruits of penance” to love of neighbor.²¹ Note that as Francis urges us to be grateful of our profound union with the Lord in the Spirit, he recalls the image of the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep.²² In this way, Francis links *metanoia* and service to neighbor.

The citation from the *Letter to the Order* comes from a description of the missionary spirit that Francis wants to inculcate in his followers. He desires the following commitments:

- a. We must listen to the voice of God’s Son calling us;
- b. We must keep God’s commands wholeheartedly;
- c. We are to extol God in our words;(This is the reason for our mission: to convince the world of God’s goodness.)
- d. We are to be patient, disciplined, and obedient.

As God’s children we are disciplined so that we will achieve faith’s perfection (Heb 3:13). Francis’s use of the passage from Tobias (4:16) in which we are called to turn to God, so that we will receive mercy, emphasizes again that conversion to the divine will is the foundation of all mission.

¹⁹1LtF 1:1; FA:ED I, 41; 2LtF 18; FA:ED I, 46.

²⁰1LtF 1:10; FA:ED I, 42.

²¹2LtF 26-27; FA:ED I, 47.

²²1LtF 1:13; FA:ED I, 42.

ARTICLE 30

In his *Rule of 1221*, Francis describes the mission of the brothers in terms of preaching peace and penance. Those of his followers who were not clerics and who formed local penitential communities translated this call to be peacemakers by serving others through spiritual and corporal works of mercy. This service was especially significant in the extension to social outcasts or those whose needs were not met by existing social and ecclesiastical structures. This is the origin of our tradition of congregational apostolic works. In a striking departure from the method of using only the writings of Francis as source material, this article includes a citation from one of the early biographies, the *Legend of the Three Companions*.²³ This lovely passage captures the essential spirit of reconciliation and evangelization that should characterize the diverse ministries we specify in our constitutions.

The section from the *Rule of 1221* also has particular significance as used here. The decision by Francis to include as part of the Rule the call of missionary preaching had enormous impact upon the Church of his time. In the sixteenth chapter of this Rule he offers a program for the apostolate:

- a. The brothers are sent as lambs among the wolves;
- b. The discernment for a mission is to be done both by the brother and the minister;
- c. Two forms of witness are offered:
 1. Peaceful Christian conduct;
 2. Announcing the Word;
- d. Because we are given over to Christ, we face every enemy with confidence.

Our prayer and our ministry are modeled on Christ's poverty and obedience (Phil 2:5-11) that led him to surrender himself to death on the Cross. For this reason, Francis enjoins us to follow Christ in struggling against the "principalities and powers" of this world even though that struggle may lead to actual martyrdom.

Modern pontiffs, synods, and episcopal documents prod us to embrace participation in the transformation of the world as a fundamental element of our preaching of the Gospel. Thus, our new Rule combines a seven-century tradition of works of mercy and charity with the biblical imperative, heard anew in our day, to proclaim the Good News to the poor and oppressed. As Francis responded to the call of Lateran Council IV to the renewal of Church life and mission, we try to envision and renew our evangelical calling in harmony with the contemporary Church.

²³L3C XIV:58; FA:ED II, 101-02.

This ecclesial energy is evident in both Episcopal pronouncements and plans as well as numerous initiatives among Church members who seek the common good in the name of Christ.

ARTICLE 31

Our service is rooted in a humility marked by gratitude and total dependence upon the loving compassion of God. In the depth of our poverty, we know that we are “unprofitable servants” no matter how much we accomplish externally and that all glory belongs to God, who is all our good.²⁴

EXHORTATION AND BLESSING

The Exhortation consists of two parts. First is a summation of the Rule in which the “last” word parallels the “first.” We hear Francis saying, “Brothers and Sister, let us begin to serve God.”²⁵ Secondly, Francis offers a central insight into the ongoing character of the charism of our Order. The death of Francis was not the death of his inspiration or his charism. This is kept alive in us, and in the Church, by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

And finally, if we are faithful to this charism that is guarded by poverty and humility, we will be blessed. The blessing from the Testament closes the text and provides a link to the Rule of 1927 and thus to the past Rules of our Order upon which this one was built and whose authentic spirit it hopes to preserve and renew.

Pax et bonum!

²⁴Adm II, V, VI, VII, XIV; FA:ED I, 129-34; 2LtF; FA:ED I, 45-51.

²⁵1C VI:103; FA:ED I, 272-73.

“We - all together - and each one of us - are the trustees of our Charism, its responsible bearers, accountable to God and the ecclesial community for it.”

Key Concepts of the Third Order Regular Rule



PROLOGUE

The words of St. Francis to his followers:
Epistola ad fideles: Recensio prior.

- This Volterra Letter points to the origins of our form of Franciscan gospel life in the ancient Order of Penance.
- It clearly reflects Francis’ *BIBLICAL* understanding of *METANOIA*.
- In striking imagery (*SPOUSE, BROTHER, MOTHER*) illustrating the action of the spirit in realizing Christian conversion, Francis places in bold relief the focal point of Christian and Franciscan penance.
- Chapter One of this letter is also the Prologue of the 1978 Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER I: OUR IDENTITY

The brothers and sisters of this order wish to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility. #2

- This Chapter summarizes the whole Rule and specifically identifies who we are in the Church.
- Article One expresses the unity of the whole Franciscan movement. Using Francis’ words to the religious of his day (Ep. Fid. II, 36-40) it also presents us with Vatican II’s teaching on religious life.
- Article Two notes the centrality of *METANOIA* in TOR spirituality and as such is the Charism Statement of the Order.

- Our fidelity to the Church, the Order, the Congregation and one another is one of obedience and reverence. Chapter One helps us grasp the all-embracing nature of OBEDIENCE in the thought of Francis.

CHAPTER II: ACCEPTANCE INTO THIS LIFE

Led by God, let them begin a life of penance conscious that all of us must be continuously and totally converted. #6

- Articles 4, 5, and 6 follow Francis' own conversion journey. For him, divesting self of all that could hinder total conversion is requisite for the journey in Christ's footprints.
- This Chapter presents the principle found in Francis' writings of mutual responsibility for our gospel life and for one another. In Article 6 it gives the first explicit references to the essentially formative character of Franciscan living of *ONGOING CONVERSION*.
- Articles 7 and 8 present a summary of Francis' understanding of continuous conversion through gospel living: *POSITIVE SURRENDER of one's whole being TO GOD AND GOD'S SERVICE*. (The Shema)
- Article 7 "to be received into obedience": instead of commitment to an enclosed life, one is bound to a familial relationship with others equally committed to total conversion and the observance of the holy gospel.



CHAPTER III. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

From the depths of their inner life, let them love, honor, adore, serve, praise, bless and glorify our most high and eternal God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. #9

- This Chapter summarizes key elements of prayer in the Franciscan tradition: To give God CEASELESS praise and thanksgiving for all God has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Jesus Christ.
- Francis calls his followers to prayer with a decidedly *contemplative* dimension.
- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours is a form of intercessory prayer for the Church and the world, as well as a sign of fidelity to the Church.
- Participation in the Eucharist should become the byword of renewed and reformed Eucharistic theology and practice among us.

- The respect for the holy Name and the sacred character of the words of the Gospels is, for Francis, a sign of CONVERSION and our readiness to put the God's Word into effect.
- Article 13 gives the SECOND meaning of POENITENTIA in the writings of Francis - the confession of one's sins. Our penitence must be honest and without affectation. Simplicity and humility are its signs. Conversion of heart is the FIRST meaning of METANOIA for Francis.
- This Chapter defines prayer as a fundamental value in our form of life. It is the marrow of our Franciscan spirituality.

CHAPTER IV: THE LIFE OF CHASTITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM.

Professing chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:12), they are to care for the things of the Lord and "they seek nothing else except to follow the will of God and to please God (1 Co 7:32). #15

- This chapter reflects the influence of Vatican II's theology of religious life.
- The Franciscan life of gospel penance becomes a reality when we no longer place any obstacle to God's work within us.
- Francis always speaks of prayer with adoration in conjunction with purity of heart "to pray unceasingly with a heart free from self-interest." 1223:10



- Article 15 emphasizes that the love of neighbor is the norm for determining our grasp of the vow of chastity and whether in fact we are "giving birth to the Lord by our loving deeds." (The Shema)
- In article 17 special reference is made to MARY, LADY AND QUEEN. We honor her who "made the Lord of Majesty our brother." 2C 198; who opened her heart in total gift of faith to the action of the Holy Spirit.
- Profound devotion to Our Lady, Mother and Queen, is the logical consequence of the preeminence of Jesus Christ in the spirituality of Francis and of all Franciscans. L.M. 9:3; 2:8: 3:1; 2C 83.

CHAPTER V: THE WAY TO SERVE AND WORK

Let the sisters and brothers be gentle, peaceful, and unassuming, mild, and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with their vocation. #20



- The fundamental value of MINORITY is emphasized in this chapter. METANOIA and Christ's announcement of the nearness of the reign of God (Mk. 1:15) are inextricably linked because childlikeness, MINORITY, is the one thing necessary for entrance into the Kingdom. (Mt. 18:13; Mk 10:16; Lk 18:17; Jn 3)
- This Chapter considers those attitudes which Francis projects as necessary for us to be *MINORES practically*. The constant tradition of the Third Order and the continuing current teaching of the Church calls us to this value. The spirit of the Beatitudes is present here.
- Seeking to be little and humble we should never desire to possess material goods, authority or power. Because of the choice to be poor, we serve and work with a spirit of prayerfulness, conscientiousness and fidelity.
- Francis saw the ability to serve and work as a grace given by God. Through service and work we can give back to God all that was given to us.

CHAPTER VI: THE LIFE OF POVERTY

The truly poor in spirit, following the example of the Lord, live in this world as pilgrims and strangers (cf. Jn 2:5). They neither appropriate nor defend anything as their own. #22

- Poverty is both personal and social. It means not appropriating anything to ourselves, neither our wills or talents or any tasks. Evangelical poverty calls us to be totally open only to the riches of God.
- Self-emptying is the process involved in Franciscan poverty. It implies total dependence on Providence and is safeguarded by identification with the poor and "doing deeds befitting our conversion."
- MARY is mentioned in this chapter deliberately because it is in the context of Christ's saving activity that Franciscan Marian devotion is centered.
- As a community and as individuals we present ourselves as servants whom no one need fear because we seek to serve and not to dominate.

CHAPTER VII: FRATERNAL LOVE

Let them manifest their love for each other in deeds (cf. 1 Jn 3:18). With confidence let them make known their needs to one another so that each can find and offer to the other that which is necessary. #23



*"... as there was one faith
in them, so was there one spirit
in them, one will, one love."
Titano I*

- By the inspiration and power of the Spirit, our Gospel life means being ever open to a deeper relationship with God in Christ in whose footsteps we walk. Our loving service to each other and all creatures manifest this relationship.
- Our CONVERSION, PRAYER, POVERTY, and MINORITY are enfolded in the “fraternity” where we experience the Lord giving us the power to love one another.
- We are made aware of the need for personal and shared responsibility for our life together realistically expressed in RECONCILIATION.
- The practical expression of METANOIA is in forgiving and in asking pardon. This is the imperative of our Franciscan life.

CHAPTER VIII: THE OBEDIENCE OF LOVE

Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another, but let them willingly serve and obey “one another with the mutual love which comes from the spirit” (cf. Ga 5:13). This is the true and holy obedience of Our Lord Jesus Christ. #25

- The fundamental attitude necessary for genuine conversion is OBEDIENCE and the framework of evangelical obedience is the brotherhood or sisterhood.
- Francis’ form of life is characterized by obedience as much as by poverty because it is based on METANOIA, the inspiration of the Lord given to each member to live the Gospel completely.
- Conforming our wills to God’s plan for humanity’s redemption involves witness and ministry for the sake of true justice. Our mission is to be messengers of God’s reconciliation.
- The Chapter, as an explicit structure enabling us repeatedly to renew our living and ministry, is described as the first vehicle for rendering obedience.

- While the limits of obedience are defined, Franciscan tradition clearly affirms the role of the minister whose personal authority is meant to be of service to unity, reconciliation, and fidelity within the fraternity.
- The relationship of poverty to obedience is clearly presented as not appropriating or possessing any office, ministry, assignment, or service.

CHAPTER IX: APOSTOLIC LIFE

In every place and circumstance let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high God, Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds. #31



- This chapter is a culmination of all that precedes it. The particular emphasis of this section is the description of the quality of mission, of service that flows from the inner dynamism of the Spirit.
- Since METANOIA is our basic charism, its relationship to apostolic action capsuled in the Great Commandment should be seen as the cornerstone of our Franciscan apostolic spirit. Francis projects the *Activity of Service* as an extension of prayer.
- Our works of Charity represent our shared charism because no matter now our constitutions specify our ministries, the works of Charity *ANNOUNCE GOD'S PEACE*. Basic to all our energies for peace is personal presence and a spirituality manifested by deeds.
- This Chapter, and article 30 in particular is our expression of the TOR response to the Church's call: "to be present in the heart of the world. . .action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a CONSTITUTIVE dimension of the preaching of the Gospel." This call to witness to justice in the world is central to the text concerning our apostolic lives.
SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 1971, JUSTICE IN THE WORLD
- The use of Legend of the Three Companions #58 in article 30 calls for an integration of personal presence and spirituality with external deeds. This is indeed a valuable criteria for discerning our apostolic effectiveness.
- In article 31, poverty is expressed in the humility and simplicity that refers all good to God. Our tasks of prayer, working, and serving others are not personal riches or talents that we may appropriate to ourselves. By our CONSTANT THANKFULNESS we witness to this very important aspect of our Third Order apostolic spirituality.