



6. Later Considerations of TOR Rule

V. Way to Serve and Work

18. *A*s poor people, the brothers and sisters to whom God has given the grace of serving or working should serve and work faithfully and devoutly so that, while they exclude idleness that is the enemy of the soul, they shall not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, that all the other material goods must serve (LR 5:1-2; FLCI 7:1-2).

19. In exchange for their work, they may accept anything necessary for their own material needs and for that of their brothers or sisters (LR 5:3-4). Let them accept it humbly as is expected of those who are servants of God and followers of the most holy poverty (ER 2:4;8-9). Whatever they may have over and above their needs, they are to give to the poor. Let them never want to be over others. Instead they must be servants and subjects to every human creature for God's sake (1 P 2:13; 2LtF 47).

20. Let the brothers and sisters be mild, peaceful and unassuming, gentle and humble, speaking honestly to all in accord with their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever they go throughout the world they should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgmental towards others. Rather, it should be obvious that they are joyful, good-humored, and happy in the Lord (Ph 4:4) as they ought to be. And in greeting others, let them say, God give you peace (LR 2:17; 3:10; ER 7:16; Test 23).

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TAB 6

Ten and Twenty-Five Years Later



Margaret Carney OSF
“A Decade of Development”

Margaret Carney OSF
“In Nomine Domini”

A Decade of Development

MARGARET CARNEY, O.S.F.

One of my favorite stories of the early franciscan brotherhood is the description of the return journey from Rome to the Spoleto valley after the approval of the Rule in 1209. Let Celano's words refresh our memories:

"While they were going along the way, they talked with one another about the number and the quality of the gifts the most kind God had bestowed upon them, and about how they had been received most kindly by the vicar of Christ, the lord and father of the whole Christian world; about how they might be able to fulfill his admonitions and commands; about how they could sincerely observe the rule they had taken upon themselves and keep it without failure; about how they should walk in all sanctity and religion before the Most High, and finally, about how their life and conduct might be an example to their neighbors by an increase of holy virtues." (ICel XIV: 34)

Many times in the past decade I have had the distinct feeling that I was living this description in a twentieth-century context. The re-incarnation has happened countless times as members of the Third Order Regular have convened in their own congregations or in workshops or retreats in order to reflect on how we "could sincerely observe the rule [we] have taken upon [ourselves]." Like those primitive companions we have known the incredible

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Margaret is known throughout the English-speaking world as both the message and the messenger of a vibrant re-discovery of TOR life and rule.

gift of seeing our Rule and Life approved by Pope John Paul II after years of work. We have been thrust into a critical examination of the motives and means by which we live our particular aspect of the franciscan life as this text becomes more and more central to our identity and consciousness. What have we learned as we have searched individually, corporately and globally for the answers to the very questions our ancestors were asking during that stay in Orte seven centuries ago?

A Communitarian Vocation

First of all I would suggest that we have learned something crucial about the communitarian nature of our franciscan vocation. Even as we have struggled with both the power and the inadequacy of language, (terms such as *fraternity/sisterhood, evangelical life, minority* have not always translated easily) we have recognized the compelling centrality of relational spirituality for us. The very nature of the Rule Project enabled us little by little to grope our ways towards that realization.

Various cooperative attempts to formulate contemporary understandings of the Third Order Regular vocation began as early as 1965 when the French and Belgian Third Order Regular sisterhoods began their work on the text. The next fifteen years were to witness a variety of such national and international collaborations. Following the Assisi assemblies of 1976 and 1979 it became increasingly clear that separate initiatives promoting the composition of a new Rule had produced a range of responses and developed a new critical and energetic sense of identity for franciscans of the penitential tradition. It was equally clear that the separate initiatives had also produced separation. Adherents of one or another project, one or another national identity, one or another historical interpretation often found themselves at loggerheads in attempting to resolve differences. (An excellent summary of this evolution will be found in Raphael Pazzelli's *The Franciscan Sisters: Outlines of History and Spirituality* soon to be published in English by the University of Steubenville Press.)

With each new stage in the evolution of the text ultimate resolution of difficulties emerged in response to prayerful and disciplined engagement of numerous participants in the various commissions. When the complete history of the project is told at some future date, it will be replete with "little flowers" depicting individual sisters and brothers who came to moments of conviction along the way. The dawning of these moments brought increasing light to bear on the complexities of the work. Even though it is possible to look back and see extraordinary talents emerging in certain persons' contributions, it is equally evident that the final product was always the culmination of a communal effort and discernment.

I doubt that any one member of the original work group would deny that while each was assigned specific charges at various moments in the progress of our task, all of the work, in all of its parts was truly the achievement of a community that reflected on the "working of the Holy Spirit" as found in life experiences of vocation as well as in authentic sources and historical analyses. (Members of the group responsible for the final redaction of the text were: Sister Margaret Carney, USA; Br. Jean-Francois Godet, Belgium; †Fr. Thaddeus Horgan, USA; Sister Ignatia Gomes, India; Sister Marianne Jungbluth, Belgium; Sister Marie Benoit Lucbernet, France; Sister Maria Luisa Piva, Brazil; Sister Honoria Montalvo, Columbia.

An abiding "amazing grace" gradually drew this group of individuals from several continents and cultures into a community rooted in an indescribable experience of God's favor which in every age, as Mary foretold, is poured out upon the poor, the hungry, and those of low estate.

When Francis directed prayer upon prayer to the Trinity, he addressed himself to the Community of life and love that is the source of All. When Francis discovered the gift of brothers and sisters as a source of this same goodness, he discerned therein a manifestation of this most intriguing mystery. In placing this rootedness in fraternity at the center of his scheme of things he intuitively placed a Trinitarian understanding of human reality within the grasp of all who would come later into this way of evangelical life. The Rule itself is testimony to the necessity of community for fullness of revelation to be heard, understood and assimilated in wisdom and charity.

A New Historical Consciousness

The second reality that manifested itself in the progression of this work was the necessity of re-examining our ways of teaching and writing franciscan history. It has become clear that enormous amounts of work wait to be done in order to provide adequate materials on the development of the Third Order in both its religious and secular forms and the history of the Second Order. Related to this is a need to examine the evolution of franciscan women as a topic in itself. This effort needs to be undertaken in such a way that the lives and contributions of franciscan women will be made accessible in studies that will emphasize common threads of spirituality and history without segmenting consciousness artificially by insisting on too great a demarcation between the women of the Second and Third Orders. Each Order needs its particular chronicles to be organized and documented for a wider reading public. At the same time, attention to lessons learned in the contemporary woman's movement will demonstrate the necessity among franciscan women to approach these tasks in a spirit of solidarity, not one of separation and competition.

Let it be said as well, that there is an urgency to giving recognition to the particular history of the congregations of brothers who hold a unique and indispensable place in the Third Order family. At the moment there are — such communities. In the existence of these fraternities of lay men we find modern mirrors of the aspirations of the early franciscan movement. Some of these congregations are facing a serious decline in numbers. In developing nations new brotherhoods are being formed. Attention to the importance of this expression of our charism is a common responsibility. Support and encouragement for new foundations should be of interest to all. Collaboration and communion with those of longer standing is an important aspect of franciscan mutuality.

The work involved in these three commitments to expand our knowledge of the Second and Third Orders, franciscan women and the Third Order brotherhoods is of almost inconceivable scope. Until it is done, however, our understanding of the manifold ways in which the franciscan charism draws breath will be limited. The great danger of such limitation is its power to abort the imaginative fecundity necessary to carry our vocation into the next millenium.

An International Structure

The third reality that emerges out of the Rule project and the Rule's promulgation is the necessity of creating and sustaining regional, national and international linkages of Third Order Regular franciscans. Some of the most painful experiences of the long journey to completion of the new text resulted from the lack of any previous communication among the hundreds of separate TOR institutes. The years between 1976 and 1982 were filled with experiences of misunderstanding and tensions created by the simple fact of forging a path through a communications wilderness. When one considers that never in our history had there been an attempt to create a global consultation of the Third Order Regular, the success of the effort borders on the truly miraculous. In 1985 we succeeded in forming a permanent International franciscan Conference of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular. Thus the work preceding the Rule which included the effort to communicate with one another in our Order for the first time in history has been translated into a permanent structure.

This organization has since celebrated a major assembly on the theme of the franciscan contribution to the renewal of the planet, peace and service to the poor. Prior to this assembly (Assisi, 1989) the IFC-TOR gave the first international endorsement needed to begin the work for the Franciscan NGO at the UN. Thus, our new TOR organization is demonstrating a capability to unite us in major initiatives for developing our self-understanding and translating that into global mission.

This power to expand and, in that expansion, to touch lives across continents is a new fact of franciscan existence for those with eyes to see and ears to hear.

Continuing Educational Needs

Much has been done in the efforts to provide adequate and engaging experience in initial and continuing formation programs on this Rule. The fact remains that in each country there are congregations that opted, for various reasons, not to make this education a priority. And there remain entire countries where a poverty of resources and communication technology make the efforts to do this work nearly impossible. Another ten years will not be enough to allow all who desire some education/formation experience to help internalize the text to achieve their goals completely. A whole new field of communication is also opening before us with the emergence of the religious orders of Eastern Europe, most of whom were prevented from cooperating in the consultation of 1982.

We also need to develop commentaries that allow for different cultural and ecclesial perspectives on the Rule and Life text to be articulated and disseminated. We lack, so far, a reading of the text from the vantage point of liberation theology. We lack an Asian perspective in written form, although the Franciscan Institute of Asia has provided admirable leadership in offering seminars on the text. In Africa, where young members are often numerous, few directors of formation have had direct contact with the sources they need. In the summer of 1991, the IFC-TOR did sponsor a very successful program for formators from Third World countries to begin to close this gap. The Federation of the USA pioneered in the innovative "Roots and Wings" seminars that were replicated hundreds of times throughout congregations. Today, however, additional groups need resources and models to use for initial and continuing formation programs of their own.

As religious women and men of the Northern Hemisphere face a new century, we acknowledge that this is a moment of transformation for religious life in our cultures. Recent research sponsored in the U.S. by LCWR and CMSM offer a great deal of data and analytical narrative to help us discern trends that seem to offer paths into future models of religious life and ministry. How can we allow our Rule and Life to speak

to this effort to forge new models and mentalities that will allow the emergence of a future religious life in a world labeled, post-modern and post-Christian? What is the meaning of the fact that we have retrieved a source that roots us in seven centuries of evangelical life and that it is providing a basis for global connectedness as we enter into this uncharted phase of development?

When I entered my Third Order Regular congregation thirty-three years ago, my world of franciscan meaning was circumscribed by the small community of sisters who taught me, the energetic young Capuchins who ministered to local youth, and the occasional friar retreat director who reminded us of our lofty ideals with greater or lesser success each year. (Not a bad circumscription at that!) Today my world — and my community's — includes franciscans from every part of the U.S. and many other international franciscan friends as well. That this is the result of extraordinary opportunity and God's gift I do not deny. But I also insist that it is sign and symbol of the possibility of becoming a family whose boundaries become more and more inclusive with each generation. This power to expand and, in that expansion, to touch lives across continents is a new fact of franciscan existence for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. I believe that the courage to dream of a new Rule began that expansion. I believe that the courage to accept the task of writing and approving that Rule encouraged and enfolded that expansion. I believe that the lived experience of making that Rule the focus of contemplative faith and the matrix of ministerial choices will continue to create a new world of franciscan meaning. Francis recommended from his death-bed that we seek what is "ours" to do. Clare reminded us that this immense gift is something we receive daily (Cl. Test 2-11). Ours it is, then, to write our own page of franciscan history, to live in the happiness of re-founding and re-weaving this vocation and handing it on the better for our lives and our labor to generations yet to come. □



IN NOMINE DOMINI

MARGARET CARNEY, O.S.F.

In 1968 as part of the implementation of the Counciliar decree on religious life, *Perfectae Caritatis*, the Sacred Congregation for Religious (as it was then known) issued experimental directives for developing contemporary programs of formation. Fr. Elio Gambari, S.M.M. traveled to the United States providing orientation for those charged with formation roles in communities and many types of seminars and meetings followed his initial educational lectures. One of these was a meeting at Alverno College in Milwaukee for formation personnel sponsored by the newly created Franciscan Federation. The inclusion of brothers was a result of the Rule Project that demonstrated the importance of an organization of all institutes, masculine and feminine, thus leading to a major change in the organization's structure.¹

Having just been appointed director of the sisters in temporary vows for my community, I went off to Alverno in search of light and guidance. To my delight, most of the attendees felt equally unequal to the task of designing new programs which were bound to frighten our members with very strict views about the novitiate or likely to seem inauthentic to youth whose culture had been up-ended by the activist environment of the times. As our solidarity increased over the days together, our questions about how to proceed with our assignment became more candid, and, at times, downright hilarious. I well remember the moment when I finally

¹ Elise Saggau, *A Short History of the Franciscan Federation Third Order Regular of the Sisters and Brothers of the United States: 1965-1995* (Washington, DC: The Franciscan Federation, 1995), 12.

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got enough courage to ask a question that had been bothering me each time I tried to write a program for vow preparation: "What do you say when someone asks you why the Rule is called the Rule of the Third Order Regular?" No one had an answer. We claimed a Franciscan identity as women religious, but this formulation on the title page of our Rule books was mysterious to us.

Six years later, Sr. Rose Margaret Delaney, F.S.P., by that time the president of the Franciscan Federation remembered my plaintive Milwaukee query and urged me to attend a meeting at which she and Atonement friar, Thaddeus Horgan, would relate their experiences at an international congress in Madrid, Spain to which several notable Franciscan leaders from the Third Order Regular had been invited. She assured me that I would find answers to my question and that I would profit from staying for the late session of that year's assembly in Chicago. Thanks to my current General Minister, Janet Gardner, who offered to stay late and share the long drive home with me, I was able to respond affirmatively. That afternoon in an auditorium in Chicago was the beginning of a new and extraordinary pilgrimage of meaning-making for me and for thousands in the Franciscan family.

What Rose Margaret and Thaddeus reported that day was the outcome of a Congress to which the generals of the masculine institutes of the Third Order Regular had been invited as members of an organization they had created among themselves years earlier. They were convening to listen to new research into the origins of their branch of the order. This research was stimulated by the Counciliar call to reclaim the charism of the founders and the work being done in the offices of the TOR Curia in Rome to put biblical, historical and theological foundations in place that were rooted in contemporary scholarship. The two masterminds of the meeting were Roland Faley, T.O.R. and Thaddeus Horgan, S.A. Roland was the Vicar General of his branch of the Order and an accomplished Scripture scholar. Thaddeus was appointed to the ecumenical center that his congregation developed in Rome to serve the needs of ecumenical observers to

the Second Vatican Council. As often happens in the Eternal City, expatriates seek each other out for common projects and occasional breaks from the stress of international community living. Roland and Thaddeus had begun an exploration into the meaning of Third Order identity and soon found that they shared a conviction that the Rule of 1927, the rule to which all of the pre-1982 generation were vowed, was not the most authentic expression of the heritage and charism of the order. This was radical thinking and both experts in Vatican offices, and leaders of congregations, resisted the notion that our lives might be on such radically shifting sands at that point. This did not deter Roland and Thaddeus. One decade after the Council's close, they had enough research in hand to propose a critical look at the understanding of TOR history and spirituality.

Realizing the potential outcomes would be dramatic, the friars of the TOR invited sisters who were national presidents of national federations to the meeting of their Inter-Obediential Congress in Madrid in 1974.² This opened the door to a dramatic new collaboration. The participants spent days examining the ancient tradition that the Third Order was designated as the Order of Penance. They uncovered valuable biblical, historical and textual information about the title and its significance. What was more important, they traced the outlines of historical development of the medieval penitential movement that was based on current research and the work of several European scholars. Outlining the manner in which Francis of Assisi was impacted by that movement's discipline and ethos, the assembly began the work of promulgating a fresh look at Franciscan beginnings. The lay character of the early movement could be better understood in relationship to this resurgence of the ancient Order of Penitents that occurred in the same twelfth and thirteenth century time frame. The Congress issued a brief document of principles that linked ancient traditions of the TOR to contemporary renewal efforts. The language was simple, direct

² See *Analecta/TOR* 123 (1974), which contains the acts, papers, and decisions of the Fourth Franciscan Tertiary Inter-Obediential Congress, held in Madrid.

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and appealing—a factor that made translation and international acceptance easier. When the Madrid Document was circulated, its new post-councilar way of seeing vocation, mission, social commitments made it a popular tool for community programs of initial and on-going formation.³

Just as important, and most exciting to those of us hearing this for the first time, was the opening of a path of research leading to more historical information and comprehension about why the Franciscan family included this vast assortment of congregations, institutes, brotherhoods, sisterhoods and contemplative monasteries—none of which belonged, by choice or necessity, to the first or second orders. The first gleanings of the historical foundations and, thus, the contemporary legitimacy of the Order, were beginning to manifest themselves.

From that point to the present day, a major new area of Franciscan research, study and debate has flourished. In 1985, three years after the Rule text was approved by John Paul II, the general superiors of the Third Order Regular met in assembly once more. This time the goal was the establishment of a permanent council of the Order with an elected president and council. This International Franciscan Council of the Third Order Regular would give physical and social location to the Third Order family and have the capacity to represent its four hundred member institutes to pan-Franciscan convenings, ecclesial events, etc. Thus, from the foggy incomprehension present in Milwaukee in 1968 to the approved constitution of the IFC-TOR in 1985, a journey of 18 years brought us from ignorance to international communion in and through the new TOR Rule.

When asked where this identity is declared, one need look no further than the title of the text and the first chapter with its three articles. First a word about the “title” statement. The publication of the rule text begins with this formula:

³ Rose Margaret Delaney and Thaddeus Horgan, ed., *The Statement of Understanding of Franciscan Penitential Life: Issued by the IV Franciscan TOR Penitential Congress* (Madrid, Spain, 1974).

In the name of the Lord! Here begins the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis.

We often hear the cliché, “What’s in a name?” This short phrase holds seven centuries of history in its brief declaration of twenty-five words. The choice of formula is a deliberate homage to the manner in which Francis opens the text of the Rule (both versions) and the wording is patterned after the translations most in use at the time. What is not obvious is the fact that the wording for the Order’s name—Third Order Regular of St. Francis—followed intense discussion because the congregations participating in the world-wide consultation had submitted an astounding variety of title suggestions. That variety was interpreted by the Work Group drafting the text as indicative of major confusion within the Order. The confusion was totally understandable. Few contemporary congregations enjoy a history of more than two centuries. Fewer still could trace their roots to the first organized fraternities of penitents. Most institutes taking part in the consultation had not been informed of the work done in the Madrid Congress. Most institutes tended to confuse the proper individual title they possessed with the more generic form of the Order’s canonical name.

The work group studied the variety of proposals and, with great care, decided to propose the title most fitting to the history of the penitential branch of the family, but without including the words “of Penance” since that qualifier was not in general usage across time and continents. When the Rome Assembly opened in 1981, hours of discussion about the relevance of an historically accurate title ensued. The final accord of the members with the Work Group proposal signaled a turning point in the debates that had taken place between 1974 and that time. It was the beginning of forming a corporate and historically grounded consciousness of “special charism” in the Third Order family of congregations.

EVANGELICAL IDENTITY

ARTICLE ONE

This article is a statement of the ecclesial place of the Third Order Regular. It opens with the opening lines that have been part of the Rule text since the 13th century. It clearly positions the Order in the universal tradition of Catholic religious life, the following of Christ through observance of the evangelical counsels. The wording “living in obedience, in poverty, and in chastity” is simple and allows for clear congruence with traditional constitutional forms that place the three vows of most religious congregations in prominence. What should be noted here is that the agreement to use the simple phrase “in poverty” is also a departure from the phraseology of the First Order rule where the famous *sine proprio*—without anything of one’s own—becomes the emblem of minorite dedication to poverty understood in a more radical and comprehensive form than that espoused by other religious orders. Here, again, the plunge into history became critical for self-understanding. As battles raged within the First Order over the interpretation of Francis’s intention in relationship to poverty and, thus, the friars’ obligations of observance, members of lay Third Order fraternities saw to the proper disposition of personal property by developing a system of social assistance in and through the charitable donations of the fraternity or through the insistence upon proper wills being made to insure that a tertiary’s property would continue to be used for alleviation of misery. Rejection of ownership was not the norm. Rather, ownership linked to evangelical convictions about the use of this world’s goods, was the norm. This common sense accommodation for lay persons following the Franciscan way of life was subsumed in the canonical discipline that finally recognized congregations of simple vows in the nineteenth century. In other words, a category for religious who did not fully renounce ownership did not become general church practice until the late nine-

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teenth century. From the thirteenth century until that point, Franciscan Third Order communities carved out a tradition that today is espoused by countless religious institutes.⁴

One of the dilemmas faced in the composition of the text was the fact that clear disciplines and traditions concerning the form of life of publicly vowed religious were now part and parcel of the self-understanding of the vast majority of those adopting this new rule. We needed ways to signal that fact in our choice of texts. At that time it was assumed that certain sections of the *Letter to the Faithful* indicated that the addressees included those who made formal promises to observe the penitential discipline as well as those who were simply “in the audience” of the text or preached message. The penitential movement admitted of much variety and attempts to codify precisely who was where on the continuum of those practices could be, and still is, a frustrating experience for many. Thus, the use of the phrase “they are held to do more and greater things” was selected to indicate a point of differentiation between Franciscans of the Secular Franciscan Order and those of the Third Order Regular.

ARTICLE TWO

If Article One places the Order squarely in the long line of canonically recognized groups that assume the obligations of religious vows within the Franciscan rule of life, Article Two places the Order in its proper historic relationship to the other branches of the Order by providing a biblical-theological definition of penance reclaimed from the writings of Francis himself. This was the most contested aspect of the proposed rule text and the resolution of the difficulties this issue posed was one of the most dramatic aspects of the Rome meeting.

Work on the new rule text was not a “top-down” process. The desire for a text that reflected new research and study of Franciscan origins was arising in multiple places from

⁴ Raffaele Pazzelli, *The Franciscan Sisters: Outline of History and Spirituality* (Steubenville: Franciscan University Press, 1993), 149.

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the close of the Council. The work of the guiding Spirit of God was nowhere more evident than in the way disparate projects, study documents, and renewal programs created a groundswell that can be traced in the activities of national federations, consortia of Franciscan superiors, interactions between First Order general ministers and the sisterhoods aggregated to them. Many TOR institutes were very closely connected to First Order at the general or provincial level due to the influence of friars who served as founders, spiritual directors, chaplains, co-workers in missionary settings. In some cultures, this relationship appeared to be a dependency. In others it took the form of cooperative activity but combined that with jealously guarded autonomy. The rule project assemblies of 1976 and 1979 were undertaken with the knowledge and support of the General Ministers of the First Order. The support was not merely attitudinal. Financial resources were contributed for the early activity through a Francophone group of Franciscan sisterhoods that took the lead in promoting a new text among their counterparts in Western Europe.

When certain groups within the assembly—and in the preparatory meetings—asserted a conviction that a precise Third Order identity and lineage had to be honored and expressed in the text, many were startled. This differentiation appeared novel, even threatening to established relationships. At times the debates and conversations that needed to occur on this point took on an adversarial tone as if one branch of the Order was being pitted against another in a contest.

All of these tensions came to the hands of the Work Group to resolve. It became clear that geography and history had conspired to prevent knowledge of the Third Order's separate existence and history from being understood by many groups of Third Order women. (The prior existence of the Inter-Obediential Congress had created a shared sense of history among the congregations of brothers and the Atonement and TOR friars.) The turning point came during a meeting in New York hosted by the Franciscan Brothers of Brooklyn.

While not the intent of the hosts, the outcome included the realization on the part of several sister participants that there were brotherhoods that shared the TOR rule and lived similar lives of service in teaching, social work, etc. Why was this a surprise? In certain countries there were no such brotherhoods or established masculine TOR houses. Thus, the critical turn from seeing the Rule as the exclusive concern of modern foundations of women, to the concern of a vast network with an ancient lineage for both men and women, came about. It was a shared experience of work and life during an intense working session of one week that illuminated the debate that had taken place to that point. Gradually a deepened awareness of the ancient outlines of the Third Order inheritance, its inclusion of men and women, its infinite variety of historical forms and groups, its uneven history of relationships with the First Order, came into focus.

In addition to this difficult path to shared identity, there was a problem to resolve in the use of terms to describe essential elements of the charism of the TOR. Prior to the Brussels Work Group session in May of 1980, the administrative team for the Rule Project and the International Franciscan Conference (CFI), met in Grottaferrata, Italy, and defined a set of values that clearly emerged from the first world-wide consultation on the draft text. This group, charged with managing the project's translations, communications and international meetings, saw the necessity of providing some parameters for the work group whose members differed in levels of international leadership experience. The International Franciscan Bureau's (BFI) mandate was to create a new text taking into account three documents that resulted from earlier Franciscan cooperative ventures: the "French Rule," the Madrid Document and "the Dutch Rule." In addition to these three, there were numerous study texts created by various national federations that were well known to the superiors being consulted and whose vote would ultimately determine the text's success. Taking all of these documents into account and having seen the results of the first international consultation on the draft text, the CFI selected four values

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that could be said to characterize the TOR spirit: poverty, minority/humility, contemplation and conversion. It was a clear statement, comprehensive and elegant in its simplicity. Each of the four terms could be probed to yield rich material for a wide variety of communities and to show long and loving adherence to profound Franciscan ideals.

The debate, however, still raged on. If we adopted a simple statement of four values without identifying one or the other as “privileged” did we run the risk of creating a type of smorgasbord approach to describing our identity? Did it matter if one or another of these took precedence in the formulation? Those most concerned that the majority of assembly participants seemed unaware of the importance of the penitential history felt that allowing this to remain unresolved was to risk losing the consent of some of the masculine congregations and several of the feminine ones as well. The task of resolving the tensions were not easy. What finally emerged was an agreement that was borne of much study, prayer and reflection. It took the form of the proposition that the call of penance/metanoia/conversion was, indeed, the singular hallmark of the early Franciscan Third Order men and women. However, they embraced that calling in the spirit of Francis’s teaching that penance, far from being a disciplinary code of mortifications and negative ascetical practices, was the very response the presence of Jesus called for in the New Testament kerygma: “Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mt 3:2). It was a call to embrace the new reign breaking into human history. However, early Franciscans shared this exigency with all Christians seeking a fuller response to the message of the Gospel. Under the inspiration shared with the first friars and poor sisters, the conversion to the life of grace exhibited by Franciscan penitents was characterized by the values espoused by both groups: contemplation, conversion, poverty, minority—and these combined in a way that the world had never witnessed before. This proposition made it possible to see the root identification as a life of penance understood as the incarnation in one’s own calling to

the poverty, humility and prayerfulness that the early Franciscans embraced and promulgated as a happy way of life.

At a point in the assembly when agreement upon this proposition was in jeopardy, Sr. Louise Dendooven and Fr. Roland Faley, came together with the Work Group members to hammer out a formulation that all parties to the debate could assent to and that singular moment of cooperation replaced months of contentious and fearful disagreements about how to go forward with both a new historical consciousness and a new commitment to this historic opportunity to redefine an entire branch of the Franciscan order.

It is also important to see the words of Francis chosen to specify the understanding of the call to penance. Here the clarion call of Francis found in Chapter 23 of the *Early Rule* states the criteria for living in “true penance”: to acknowledge, adore and serve God, abstaining from all evil, persevering in doing good.⁵ It is a program of life reduced to five terms: know, worship, serve, avoid, do. The simplicity is amazing—so amazing that it might be the reason why we ignore the formula and think of it as childish moralizing. In fact, the old catechism sayings seem very close to this and we tend to relate those catechetical sayings to a kind of naïveté. But there it is, in all of its uncompromising sweep and solemnity. We will be judged. The eschatological hour of decision will be rooted in our obedience to this injunction. No one who wants to be in the company of Christ at that hour is exempt. Those who seek the guarantee that the second death will do no harm must heed these words.

ARTICLE THREE

It is well known that Francis placed obedience to Church authority, vested in the papacy, in a very prominent place in the scheme of Franciscan things. This insistence upon obedience and reverence to the pope (the then-current pontiff named in the Rule but implying whoever held that post in

⁵ ER XXIII, *FA:ED*, vol. 1, 83-85.

The Cord, 57.4 (2007)

future) as part of the fabric of the text was not without its set of debates. Some felt a need to mimic the original method of Francis by naming John Paul II in the text. In a dramatic turn of events, the work group debated this issue the morning of May 13, 1981 and emerged from the morning session to the news of the assassination attempt on the Pope that day. Others wanted to mitigate a statement that might appear to create formal obligations that mirrored the Jesuit tradition. It was clear that there could be no argument with the consciousness of Francis that his fraternity/sorority was at the heart of the church and that he feared rupture with Rome as much as he feared anything. Given the gulf of centuries, canon law refinements and actual historical experience that separated us from the Early Rule, what should we do?

Our reflections upon the many suggestions we received led us to see that this article was really an opportunity to describe that “living in obedience” that characterized Francis’s conception of obedience as mutual and humble respect for one another leading to profound mutuality as a ground for all decisions and exercises of freedom. Thus, obedience to the Pope became a vast container for a set of inter-related acts and attitudes of mutual obedience and engaged relationships that preserved proper freedoms while promoting fraternal and substantial collaborations. Thus, this article insists that there are inter-woven commitments that define the relationships of the Third Order Franciscan. First, we assert the historic and ever developing relationship of reverence and accountability for being a public figure in the service of the Church. However, the very same attitude must be demonstrated within the Order, and the commitment of obedience to one’s own ministers is placed on a level with that of the Pope. It is, after all, the minister who is most likely to need this expression of minority to be concrete in our lives, far more than the Pope who will rarely, if ever, interact officially with an individual friar or sister. The very same attitude is then extended to the members of our immediate community. The heroic attitude posed by some in relationship to obedience to Roman authority is often belied

by the fractious relationships within one's own community. Consistent attention to living in obedience—of hearing the other's need, advice, desire, direction as God-inspired—is a profoundly penitential form of life. Finally, the attitudes of continual interchange and attention fostered by this obediential stance gives rise to a desire to see the entire Franciscan family as a blessed web of relationships, a web that must be created, maintained and protected by human labor. Given the privileged opportunity to write a new rule text, a text that would have repercussions throughout the Order/s, the authors proposed a call to foster a universal, and now international, solidarity among all branches and entities. We live in an era that allows such “unity and communion” to be dramatically exhibited and experienced. Instant communication, international travel, global level cooperation are possible to modern Franciscans in ways undreamed of by earlier generations. This article calls us to the realization of new possibilities and makes it a matter of observant obedience to do all in our power to live beyond the boundaries of our own singular institutions.

There we have it. The identity chapter—as I often call Chapter One—is three short statements that are interlinked in a tight framework that combines eight centuries of history with unfolding international horizons. It establishes an ecclesial point of belonging, a careful but comprehensive description of the specific identity of the penitential Franciscan vocation of the Order, and a framework of essential obediential relationships that protects the individual from isolation and fragmentation in a world that makes the discipline of community more and more difficult to achieve.

The path to these declarations was painful, and it was not without enormous effort to be attentive to the Spirit at work in contrary opinions and heated debates. That, too, is part of our inheritance. We are called to an identity of continual conversion to God and each other. This chapter of the Rule was born in that spirit.