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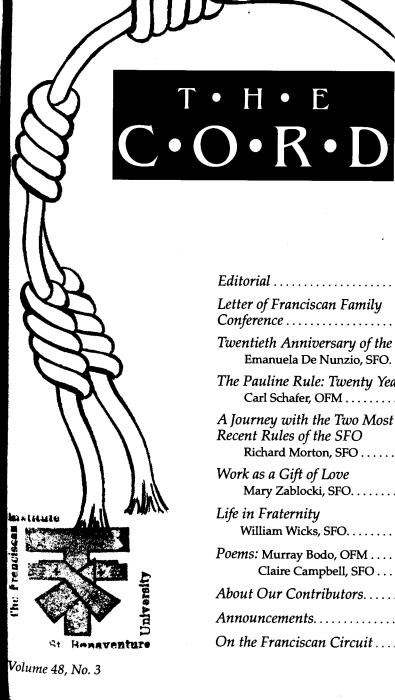
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A FRANCISCAN SPIRITUAL REVIEW



Editorial	. 101
Letter of Franciscan Family Conference	.102
Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO	.109
The Pauline Rule: Twenty Years After Carl Schafer, OFM	
A Journey with the Two Most Recent Rules of the SFO Richard Morton, SFO	122
Work as a Gift of Love Mary Zablocki, SFO	. 130
Life in Fraternity William Wicks, SFO	.136
Poems: Murray Bodo, OFM	
About Our Contributors	. 129
Announcements	. 145
On the Franciscan Circuit	.156

May/June 1998

THE CORD A Franciscan Spiritual Review

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- 1. MSS should be submitted on disk or typed on $8\ 1/2 \times 11$ paper, one side only, double spaced.
- 2. The University of Chicago *Manual of Style,* 13 ed., is to be consulted on general questions of style.
- Titles of books and periodicals should be italicized or, in typed manuscripts, underlined.
 - Titles of articles should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined or italicized.
- 4. References to Scripture sources or to basic Franciscan sources should not be four-noted, but entered within parenthesis immediately after the cited text, with period following the closed parenthesis. For example:

(1Cor. 13:6).

(2Cel 5:8).

(RegNB 23:2).

(4LAg 2:13).

A list of standard abbreviations used in *The Cord* can be found inside the back cover. The edition of the Franciscan sources used should be noted in the first reference in a mss.

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Editorial



For over eight hundred years the words and example of Francis and Clare of Assisi have inspired people all over the world, women and men, clerics and lay, to follow more closely in the footprints of Jesus Christ, to live the Gospel life with greater integrity, to celebrate the pure gift of life with joy and gratitude. The movement which Francis and Clare began has amazingly spanned the centuries and the various cultures of the global community and still draws followers today from every walk of life.

One struggles to grasp the inexplicable charm of these founders, the perennial attractiveness of their "way of life." In our own times of renewal there has been a concerted effort to draw energy from the founding charism. For members of the Third Order, both Secular and Regular, this has resulted in a formulation of new Rules, more faithful to the spirit of the original Franciscan impulse and more relevant to the times in which we live. These Rules were the result of an unprecedented process of wide consultation and years of dialog and study.

In 1978 Paul VI gave formal approval to the new Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order. The twenty years since then have witnessed a serious restructuring and re-imagining among the Secular Franciscans. This year, 1998, the Franciscan Family celebrates the twentieth anniversary of the Pauline Rule, supporting the Secular Brothers and Sisters by honoring their efforts and achievements, not only over the past twenty years, but over the eight hundred years in which they have allowed the Spirit of God and the Spirit's holy operation to guide their lives and way of being in the world.

Archbishop Rembert Weakland observes:

The sign of the life of the Spirit among us is the belief that this world counts and that somehow what happens here and now will be a part of the Kingdom as it is brought to fulfillment by the Spirit.... This new attitude toward the world forms the basis of all lay spirituality and has been an enrichment for the lives of so many. I sense that it is one of the most important works of the Spirit in our age.¹

In this issue *The Cord* joins in the celebration, offering reflections on the life of Secular Franciscans today. We thank them for their faithfulness in bringing the work of the Spirit into play wherever they find themselves in this world, for their untiring commitment to the truth that "this world counts."

¹"Afterthoughts," Faith and the Human Enterprise: A Post-Vatican II Vision (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), 157-8.

Second Letter of the Conference of the Franciscan Family on the Occasion of the Jubilee 2000, In the Year of the Holy Spirit

"Above all, seek the spirit of the Lord and his holy operation"

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Brothers and Sisters,

"The year 1998, the second of the preparatory phase of the Jubilee, will be dedicated in a particular way to the Holy Spirit and to His sanctifying presence within the Church." So wrote Pope John Paul II in his *Tertio millennio adveniente* (n. 44). Following on the letter "Reconciled in Jesus Christ," which we sent you last year, we would like to take the opportunity offered to us Franciscans this year by this circumstance to become more conscious of the place taken by the Holy Spirit in the experience of Francis and Clare and of the place which He ought to take today in the lives of their followers. May it at the same time stimulate us to discover what is the original contribution which the great Franciscan Family can bring to the movement of rediscovery of the Spirit taking place throughout the Church.

The Holy Spirit in the Experience of Francis and Clare

The Holy Spirit is the real secret which explains the life of Francis, the hidden spring from which flowed every intuition and initiative of his. Rereading the first biographies of the Saint in this light, one remains impressed by a singular fact: every chapter of these, it can be said, begins with a formula of the type "moved by the Spirit," or "full of the grace of the Spirit," or "by divine inspiration" Francis said, went, did. . . . All the great turning points of his life are attributed to the specific action of the Spirit. It was "under the impulse of the Spirit" that Francis entered San Damiano and received the command: "Go,

Francis, repair my house," and it was the same Spirit that gradually revealed to him its meaning and significance (LM 2:1). It was again "by the grace of the Holy Spirit" that he later discovered that the Lord had not called him and his companions "only for their salvation, but also for that of many others." He discovered, in other words, also the apostolic and missionary dimension of his Order (L3S 10:36).

In his work of "formation" of the other friars, too, he let himself be guided by the Spirit: "The blessed father Francis was being daily filled with the consolation and the grace of the Holy Spirit; and with all vigilance and solicitude he was forming his new sons" (1Cel 1, 11:26).

As has been said by eminent scholars, the movement set in motion by Francis was "the greatest charismatic movement in the history of the Church." The "charismatic" traits were the novelty, the spontaneity, the immediacy of his action. His discourses were "full of the power of the Holy Spirit;" he invoked the Spirit before he began to preach, and his words poured out in such a way as to make it evident to all that "it was not he who spoke, but the Spirit of the Lord (LM 2:2, 12:7)." Some of his typical gestures are of a clearly charismatic kind. Every time that "he was full of the ardour of the Holy Spirit, to express the exuberant warmth of his heart" he began to speak in French (1Cel 7:16; 2Cel 8:13). This was obviously his way of speaking "in tongues." He did not even shrink at times from asking God to reveal His will to him "at the first opening of the Bible (1Cel 2:92)."

All this brings us to understand where is to be found the ultimate explanation of Francis's "conformity" with Christ: not in a self-imposed program of methodical imitation of Christ in this or that virtue, but in having in himself the Spirit of Christ and the same sentiments which were in Him. His was an imitation of Christ which was "pneumatic" before it was ascetic.

The Holy Spirit which is the secret of the life of Christ, his "inseparable companion," as St. Basil describes him, who inspires his every action and guides his every step, is also the intimate secret of the life of Francis. . . . And what is said of Francis, must likewise be said of his "little plant" Clare, on whom one day the Holy Spirit was seen to descend under the form of two wings (Proc). In fact it is "one and the same Spirit" which has called the brothers and sisters (2Cel 145:193). These have been "espoused with the Holy Spirit" in imitation of Mary, "Spouse of the Holy Spirit" (a title which Francis himself helped to introduce into the language of theology) (OffPass).

What Francis Taught His Followers Regarding the Holy Spirit

Francis was not content with himself living the whole of his life "in the Spirit," but through his Rule and Admonitions tried to stamp upon the life of

all his followers also this great opening to the Spirit. He once proclaimed the Holy Spirit to be "the Minister General of the Order," regretting the fact that he could not insert this idea into his Rule, because this had already been approved by papal bull (2Cel 145:193). What the friars should desire above all things is to have "the Spirit of God at work within them (RegB 10)." Both those who work with their hands and those who, like Antony, dedicate themselves to study and teaching, should strive "not to extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion" (RegB 5).

The Seraphic Father has also left us very valuable criteria, biblical in tone, for discerning on the one hand when a religious lives according to the Spirit and on the other when he follows the letter and the flesh: "A religious has been killed by the letter when he has no desire to follow the spirit of Sacred Scripture, but wants to know what it says only so that he can explain it to others. On the other hand, those have received life from the spirit of Sacred Scripture who, by their words and example, refer to the most high God, to whom belongs all good, all that they know or wish to know, and do not allow their knowledge to become a source of self-complacency" (Adm 7, 12).

St. Bonaventure, faithful interpreter in this, too, of the thought of the Founder, has made of the anointing by the Spirit ("spiritual unction") the characteristic of the Franciscan Order. He distinguishes among the various religious Orders of his time "those who pay attention primarily to speculation and secondarily to unction and those who pay attention primarily to unction and secondarily to speculation," placing the Seraphic Order among the latter.²

Our Service of the Spirit

In our life as followers of Francis and Clare, how are we to rediscover this powerful spiritual lymph which was there at our origin? Today's Church is aware of many and widely varying needs, but none of them is more urgent than this: to offer a genuine response to the world's thirst for spirituality. Well-known is the statement made by Paul VI: "Many times We have asked ounselves what is the first and last need that we see in this blessed and beloved Church of ours.... And you know what it is: the Holy Spirit! The Church has need of a perennial Pentecost; has need of fire in her heart, the word on her lips, prophecy in her glance."

The world, if it does not find in Christian communities a spiritual alternative to the materialism and arid technologism which characterize today's society especially in rich countries, will look elsewhere, at times in extremely doubtful places and forms. The attraction exercised especially on the young by such centers of spirituality as Taizé, for example, demonstrates the positive aspect of the same tendency. But where have the Christian faithful more right to find

"dwellings of the Spirit" than in our Franciscan communities or fraternities? Many bishops want us in their local Churches expressly in order to respond to this need.

St. Francis has indicated to us the guiding principle for carrying out this task: presenting the spirit of holy prayer and devotion. In other words, prayer. It is above all in prayer that the Holy Spirit creates "intimacy with God." We may note a constant fact in Scripture: the Holy Spirit comes to those whom he finds in prayer. He came to Jesus after he had received baptism when "he was in prayer" (cf. Lk. 3:21); he came upon the apostles while they were "of one mind and persevering in prayer, with Mary, the mother of Jesus" (cf. Acts 1:14). And Jesus himself has said that the heavenly Father gives the Holy Spirit to "those who ask him" (Lk. 11:13.) St. Bonaventure says that the Holy Spirit comes "where he is loved, where he is invited, where he is expected."

Alongside this principal duty, attention may certainly also be given to other interests and other types of "service of the Spirit" (2Cor. 3:8). The Holy Spirit—as the Second Vatican Council affirmed—is at work also outside the visible boundaries of the Church, to guide the development of the social order and give everyone "the possibility of coming into contact with the paschal mystery of Christ." It is up to us Franciscan men and women to play our part in maintaining in life and developing "the spirit of Assisi" which has been given its highest expression in the meeting of the heads of all the religions promoted by John Paul II around the tomb of St. Francis in 1986—a spirit of dialogue, of peace-making, of respect for creation.

We should not forget, either, that the first visible effect of the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost was that of uniting in the one faith many different peoples. He is the Spirit of unity and he is present wherever unity is created or reinforced: between the partners of a marriage, in the community, in the whole world. To be noted also is that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace (cf. Gal. 5:19).

In our own days, the Holy Spirit has raised in the Church a great variety of ecclesial movements which are one of the more visible signs of the "new Pentecost" hoped for by Pope John XXIII on the occasion of the Council. We must learn to appreciate this "grace of the Spirit" which is diffused in the Church today, seeing in it an effective invitation for our life and presence in the Church.

Let us also keep in mind that some components of the great Franciscan Family have in recent years received special impulses towards renewing their lives by force of the Spirit, thanks to the formulation of their Rule. On 8 December 1997, in fact, occurred the fifteenth anniversary of the approval of the "Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis," and on 26 June 1998, there will be commemorated the twentieth anniversary

of the approval of the renewed Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. It is worth while giving due attention to these anniversaries in order to build a greater understanding and a determination to render an authentic service to the Spirit in the Church.

Indications and Proposals

On the basis of what we have just indicated as a possible "service to the Spirit" in today's Church, we would like to offer some simple suggestions of a practical and operational kind.

The Primacy of the Spirit

For the Franciscan Family, the most precious fruit of this year dedicated to the Holy Spirit should be a renewed effort to restore primacy to the spirit. Not only in a quantitative sense, by giving more time to prayer, but also in a qualitative sense, by bringing it about that every activity-manual, academic, pastoral-is imbued with that "spirit of prayer and devotion to which all other things are meant to contribute," as our Seraphic Father exhorts us. To the renewal of the Franciscan charism may equally be applied what Pope John Paul II had to say of the renewal of the Church in general after the Council: it "cannot become a reality in any other way than in the Holy Spirit, that is to say with the help of his light and his power."6 This is the opportune moment to commit ourselves to making our Franciscan churches and houses and, as far as possible, our SFO Fraternities, into authentic "centers of spirituality." Let us, for example, examine ways of making available "schools of prayer," "times of the Spirit," a well-qualified "spiritual direction," the practice and the spread of the lectio divina or a meditative and shared reading of spiritual texts (especially Franciscan ones).

The Spirit of Unity

The children of Francis and Clare are called to live the spirit of unity especially among themselves, developing constantly closer bonds of esteem, of concord, and of collaboration between the different Franciscan Families, recalling in the words of Dante that the first companions of Francis edified the world most of all by "their concord and their joyful semblance." We want to insist, as we did in last year's pre-Jubilee letter, on inviting to an ever closer communion and collaboration within the great Franciscan Family. We ask that, as far as possible, our forces be united in various fields: for example in formation, in particular as regards properly Franciscan formation, in spiritual animation, in cultural, apostolic, and charitable fields. Within the three Franciscan

Orders (with all due respect to the specific vocation of the Sisters of the Second Order) encouragement should be given to meetings even of an informal kind, to exchanges, common moments of prayer and reflection, concrete initiatives of communion and fraternity.

Ecumenical engagement should find in the Franciscan Family a particular willingness: the "spirit of Assisi" should make us particularly attentive and solicitous promoters of ecumenical initiatives.

Peace

We have recalled that one of the most precious "fruits of the Spirit" is peace, and we know how much our Seraphic Father himself desired to be an instrument of peace and have his Brothers spread it throughout the world, even through the manner in which they greeted the people (LP 67). The Franciscan Family ought to be in the "front line" wherever there is work for peace. Where ethnic conflicts of all kinds tear nations apart and create situations of high tension, we ought to be promoters of peaceful concord, even if this means accepting initiatives which require great courage and upholding positions which are openly inspired by the Gospel and the "new commandment" of mutual love. This presupposes that in our own midst above all we take the greatest care to eliminate the remotest trace of antagonism, hegemony, or division.

The Richness of the Ecclesial Movements

Different movements throw light upon the need for a more living faith, a more concrete charity, a more heartfelt and spontaneous prayer: all these are values which Franciscan spirituality puts at our disposal abundantly in our choice of life. They stimulate our Fraternities to be more alive, more amenable to renewal, more open to welcoming the new things of the Spirit, more capable of letting the demands of obedience and fraternity prevail over our personal choices and experiences. We should be ready to welcome and make use of these stimulating reminders, recognizing them as incentives to letting the rich spirituality proper to our charism grow young again and wisely drawing from them pointers for the way in which we incarnate in our lives the spirituality proper to our charism. If we do not renew ourselves, we run the risk of no longer saying anything or giving anything to the Church and to the world.

Conclusion

We recognize that throughout the Franciscan Family the values which we have underlined in this letter already find positive and encouraging imple-

mentation. But we would invite you not to be content with what has already been done and is now being done, but to strive for new goals, always mindful of the exhortation of our Father St. Francis: "My Brothers, we must begin to serve our Lord and God. Until now we have done very little" (LM 14:1).

At the moment of writing this letter we have before our eyes the sad state of the earthquake-damaged Franciscan sanctuaries of Assisi: places which are "indispensable" to our spirituality and our living contact with Francis. While we hope for their rapid restoration so that they may remain the longed-for goal of pilgrimages, in the light of the Great Jubilee to come we pray that together with the material work there may also take place a "reconstruction" of our ever more authentic fidelity to Francis and Clare and, through them, to Christ and the Gospel.

We ask our Poor Clare Sisters for a special prayer of intercession that with the help of our Father St. Francis and our Mother St. Clare we may let ourselves be molded by the Spirit as "new creatures" (cf. 1Cor. 11:7), docile to the Spirit which "renews all things" (AP 21:5).

Rome, 1 January 1998

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Endnotes

¹References to the writings and early biographies are from the *Omnibus*.

²St. Bonaventure, Collationes in Hexaemeron, 22:21 (ed. Quaracchi, IX, p. 269).

³Discourse on 29 November 1972 (Insegnamenti di Paolo VI, X, p. 1210s.).

⁴St. Bonaventure, Sermons, Fourth Sunday after Easter, 2 (ed. Quaracchi, IX, p. 311).

⁵Cf. Gaudium et Spes, 22 and 26.

⁶AAS, 73 (1981), p. 521.

7"la loro concordia e i lor sembianti"—Dante, Paradiso, XI, 76 s.



The Twentieth Anniversary of the Rule

A Letter from the General Minister, SFO

Celebrating an anniversary is not an end in itself. It seeks to make an event live again; it attempts to remember some person, incident, or gift. For us, Secular Franciscans, the twentieth anniversary of the Rule is an occasion to rediscover this "gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father."

For me, this twentieth anniversary of the Rule evokes vivid memories and stirs up profound feelings—twenty years of the Rule, twenty years of my life; twenty years of the Lord's fidelity which has led me by the hand along a path still unknown, twenty years of the fragility of my response.

It is well known that this Rule was the result of an evolution that had been developing for a long time in the Franciscan Third Order. The work of elaborating the text lasted twelve years and involved extensive consultations, which included lay and religious experts as well as leaders of the Order from various nations. But, notwithstanding the openness of the process, the final result expressed the hopes and efforts of but a relative few.

The vast majority of Third Order members (then estimated to be over one million, some 435,000 in Italy alone) knew little or nothing about it. For many, their first encounter with the new Rule was truly a shock. Many members of the Third Order remained bewildered and disconcerted: "no longer were there specific requirements for acceptance; . . . no mention of the scapular, cord, recitation of twelve Our Fathers; . . . no norms of life, abstinence, penances; ... no mention of indulgences, confession, communion, daily mass. ..." The omission of specific practices, then-considered important, caused confusion and disappointment. And what about the unity and the autonomy sanctioned by the new Rule? For centuries, the members of the Third Order had been accustomed to division into Obediences; described themselves quite naturally as *Friar Minor*, *Conventual*, or *Capuchin* Third Order members; and felt tied to only one friary. They expected to be instructed, guided, and directed in a relationship of filial dependence (not fraternal cooperation).

I remember the first formation courses, the first spiritual exercises given on the new Rule. Many older members responded with rejection and bitterness. The new Rule was not the rule that they had professed, to which they had conformed an entire life. Somewhere along the way someone had changed direction and they did not feel like starting again from the beginning.

How much has changed since those first years! The new Rule has not produced divisions, but has been accepted much more rapidly than many would have thought—a sign that it is truly a "gift of the Spirit which leads to the Father." In a relatively brief time, "Third Order Franciscans" became "Secular Franciscans." They found in the Pauline Rule everything that is essential and of universal value for the life of lay Franciscans—in both its spirit and structure. The Rule provides a foundational structure containing those elements that would enable a disciple of St. Francis of Assisi to follow more closely the Lord Jesus Christ while remaining in the world.

As was stated in the Apostolic Letter of approval and in the letter of the four Franciscan Ministers General, the Rule contains two elements of renewal:

- a return to the origins, that is, to the spiritual experience of Francis of Assisi and of the brothers and sisters of penance who received from him their inspiration and guidance;
- an openness to the Spirit in the signs of the times, following the teaching and encouragement given them by the Second Vatican Council.

It does not make much sense to do an analysis, even if synthetic, of the contents of the Rule. For me, it is a way of

- following the gospel
- according to the example of St. Francis
- under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Following the Gospel

Article 4 provides the key to reading the whole Rule. There, for the first time in an explicit manner, the entire Franciscan Family is presented as following the same path. For all (Friars, Clares, Seculars) "the rule and life is to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." All Franciscans, in whatever state of life, are called to become what had been promised in Baptism. In giv-

ing to his followers a "form of life," St. Francis hoped to prepare in the Church men and women able "to live the gospel."

What does it mean for Secular Franciscans "to observe the gospel"? Above all it means to know God as Father, to have Jesus Christ as the inspiration, model, and criterion of our every action, and to allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit of the Lord. It also means to realize in our apostolates the love of others in a spirit of service; to work in a context proper to our secular state, witnessing a life of penance as continual conversion to the gospel; to realize a universal fraternity in Christ; to dedicate ourselves to the works of mercy, to the promotion of justice and peace, and to the safeguarding of creation.

According to the Example of St. Francis

No matter what some critics say, the Rule of 1978 is more "Franciscan" than those which preceded it—not only because it includes as *Prologue* (and integral part) the *Exhortation of St. Francis to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, but also because it contains continual references to his writings and spirituality. The Rule presents Francis as the inspiration and pattern for following Christ, for living the gospel, for rebuilding the Church, and for loving and serving the lowly.

Francis sends us to the gospel, which is, at the same time, both beginning and end. But, in a certain sense, the gospel also points to Francis, who shows us how to live the gospel with simplicity of heart and integrity of faith. And we Franciscans must live the gospel; all that we are and do must be informed by the gospel, without limiting ourselves to a "careful reading" or intellectual contemplation.

Francis adhered perfectly to the gospel: to the *entire* gospel, and to the gospel *only*. Francis had no interest in following the model of monastic institutions, having received from the Lord a right and just way of life to follow. This insistence of Francis provides an efficacious lesson for us who often feel at a loss before the growth and success of contemporary ecclesial movements. We have no need to copy anyone. We have our own way to follow, and God wills that we might be able to follow it to its depths.

Under the Guidance of the Holy Spirit

The true disciple of St. Francis must be attentive to the Spirit, always ready to do "that which pleases the Lord." Followers of St. Francis embrace this attitude of great spiritual tension, truly in love with the Lord not as servants but as friends.

All of this emerges above all in the *Prologue*, in which Francis promises to those who produce worthy fruits of penance that "the spirit of the Lord will

rest upon them and he will make his home and dwelling among them." This means becoming contemplative people, marked by our personal experience of God, abandoned to the mysterious richness of grace which enfolds us and profoundly affects us.

In the Rule the Holy Spirit is presented through actions—present in the Church and raising up in the Church spiritual families, calling the faithful to follow Christ, moving them "to strive for perfect charity," leading them into truth. And the Holy Spirit alone can lead Secular Franciscans to let "prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do." Without the Spirit, all apostolic activity would be translated into a sort of sterile activism, and dedication to the needy and marginalized would become nothing more than philanthropy.

The twentieth anniversary of the Rule can lead us to discover in it new riches and unexplored depths. Spirit-full, it is inexhaustible, always provocative. It always calls us forth because life in the Spirit has no limits, has no end.

Emanuely De Winsis

Emanuela De Nunzio, SFO General Minister Rome, March, 1998

Translated from the Italian by Robert M. Stewart, OFM

How St. Francis Teaches Us to Open Heaven

When I was a boy, I thought that heaven must start behind the stars, their lights holes in the night that covered God like curtains. There had to be a secret cord that drew them, revealing God's apartments. St. Francis said an enemy's hand was creased with codes that told the merest boy how to open God's bright heaven. The hidden handle was the enemy's very hand, and hateful eyes were openings to glory. But how was I to know what lightless labyrinths those creases trace, how long it takes to travel easy there before the handle turns.

Murray Bodo, OFM



Carl Schafer, OFM

This is the sequel to an article I wrote five years ago, entitled, "The Pauline Rule—Fifteen Years After," which was published in *The Cord*, November 1993. I presuppose all that I wrote on that occasion, but will return in the last paragraphs to some of the questions and points that I raised.

I will concentrate more on the state of the Secular Franciscan Order as I experience it twenty years after it received the Rule from Pope Paul VI in 1978. I hope to show to what extent the Pauline Rule is embodied in the SFO today.

Having finished my term as General Assistant in 1997, I consider this article to be a kind of Last Testament, in which I take the liberty to add some personal comments and to conclude with some recommendations.

Unity

As a consequence of the Rule of 1978, the secular Franciscan Order has been restructured as a single Order with Fraternities at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

The restructuring of the Order has been widely achieved, but some National Fraternities are still in the process of unifying their structure. Canada has worked consistently at its problem, which is almost resolved. In Italy, the difficulties are enormous and will take more time to resolve. Some want unity structured from above while others want to build up to national unity from below.

There are still unresolved issues in a number of other countries regarding unity in structure. Often the problems are kept hidden and are not confronted. Needless to say, these countries would not care to be named. Some National Councils (e.g., India) are composed of representatives belonging to the obediences of the friars. The old obediential Third Order Provinces are renamed

"Regional Fraternities." This is not the restructuring of the SFO that the Rule and Constitutions call for.

"Provincial" is a structure that belongs properly to the religious Orders of friars, not to the SFO, but the term is still preferred in Germany. The corresponding secular term and structure is "Regional Fraternity," which is usually not co-terminal with a particular province of friars.

Far more important than unity of structure is unity of spirit. In fact, structural unity must be built on the spiritual unity of minds and hearts; otherwise, unity is fictitious and structural unity is an imposition. I am convinced that, in every country and at every level of Fraternity, much hard work has yet to be done in order to achieve unity of spirit. Unity of structures would then follow automatically, because the spirit creates the structures that are best suited to express itself.

National Fraternities

What strikes me, after making many visits, is that each country is different and so is the state of the SFO national fraternities. Generalizations can be misleading. One cannot speak about the Third World countries or about the ex-Communist countries as though they form a monolithic or homogeneous block.

The state of the SFO in Mexico is vastly different from the state of the SFO in Thailand, although both countries are classified as Third World. Mexico, with 102,415 members, is the largest national fraternity after Italy (120,000). The Third Order has flourished in Mexico throughout its history of nearly five hundred years of evangelization. The Secular Franciscan Order has inherited its cultural expression and religious spirit, but now it is solidly based on the Vatican II model.

Thailand has one local fraternity canonically established two years ago in Bangkok, with barely more than five professed members. Without a Franciscan history or tradition, all that it has in common with Mexico is that it too is solidly based on the Vatican II model.

The SFO exists in almost every country of Africa and in the islands to the east. There are recognized National Fraternities in Zambia, South Africa, Madagascar, and Mauritius. But there are thirteen National Fraternities in formation and six countries with local fraternities in formation. The state of these fraternities varies from vibrant to embryonic.

In Africa it is not difficult to find people to join local fraternities. It is difficult to give them a proper formation, and it is very difficult to find spiritual assistants and animators to accompany them all. Without proper accompaniment and formation, a fraternity can easily develop into a sect.

The Third Order existed in all the ex-Communist countries. Since 1989 the Secular Franciscan Order is coming into its inheritance. At present there

are seven recognized National Fraternities (Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia), four National Fraternities in formation (Byelorussia, Latvia, Rumania, Ukraine), and three countries with local fraternities in formation (Albania, Estonia, Russia). In many of these countries, the very fabric of the human person has to be restored. Formation in the SFO must begin there.

Since the 1970s many members (but not all) in France, Germany, and the Benelux countries have presented a particular problem regarding the acceptance of the Rule and General Constitutions, especially with regard to profession. It is not only that they reject terminology which they consider proper to religious life. There has also been a general reluctance to commit oneself to lifelong binding promises in both secular society and in the priesthood and religious life.

In the past five years, there has been a marked improvement in dialogue between the national fraternities of Europe. The National Council of France, in particular, has gone deeply into studying the Rule and General Constitutions. The voluntary and unofficial association of Secular Franciscans from Eastern and Western Europe at annual EUFRA-Meetings and EUFRA-Weeks has also helped the dialogue.

Acceptance of the Rule and General Constitutions has not been a problem for the SFO in the United States, which does not mean that the Secular Franciscans do not take their profession seriously or that they simply submit to ritual. But in the United States, as in Western Europe, a major problem is the advanced age of the members and the absence of younger people. I think this is another aspect of the reluctance of people to commit themselves to a group with obligations to fulfill.

International Fraternity

International government has been emphasized. The present Presidency of the International Council, elected in 1996, includes three men and six women from eight different countries and four General Assistants from three other countries.

The Minister General, Emanuela De Nunzio, from Italy, is in her second term. The Vice Minister General, Encarnacion Del Pozo, is from Spain. The Presidency Councillors are: Jean Pierre Rossi (French Area) from France; Emerencia Rossato (Italian Area) from Italy; Marianne Powell (English Area) from Denmark; Rosalvo Mota (Portuguese Area) from Brazil; Alicia Gallardo (Spanish Area) from Chile; Wilhelmina Visser-Pelsma (German Area) from the Netherlands; Pedro Nunu da Silva Coelho (Franciscan Youth) from Portugal.

At the moment (September, 1997), the four General Assistants are: Fr. Ben(itius) Brevoort, OFMCap, President of the Conference of General Assis-

tants; Fr. Zvonimir Brusac, TOR, Secretary; Fr. Valentin Redondo, OFMConv; Fr. Carl Schafer, OFM. We come from Indonesia, Croatia, Spain, and Australia, respectively.

Fr. Ben was reconfirmed in November 1996 and is in his second six-year term. Fr. Zvonimir was appointed in September 1995. Fr. Valentin took up his appointment in October 1996. After the General Chapter of the Friars Minor in May 1997 and before the end of the year, I will be replaced as General Assistant, having held that office since July 1985 for twelve years, which is the maximum permitted by the *Statutes for Assistance*, Art. 11.

The SFO Minister General lives in Rome, as do the four General Assistants. But the Presidency makes a conscious effort to avoid central government and government from Rome. Not all the national councils would agree that the government is in fact decentralized or free of excessive Roman influence. Some are allergic to anyone or anything that comes out of Rome.

Autonomy

On paper (in the Rule and General Constitutions), the SFO is autonomous. But it will not be autonomous in fact until it is united as a single Order in every regional and national fraternity, until the Councils at the various levels are capable of governing the fraternities, and until the Order is self-sufficient financially.

These conditions involve outgrowing the obediential divisions of the friars that were introduced into the Secular Third Order in the course of its history, dependence on the friar to direct the fraternity, and financial dependence on the friars.

Given the responsibility of *altius moderamen* that the Holy See places on the four Orders of friars, it is difficult for the friars to avoid being "Directors" of the fraternities, as they used to be by law before 1978, and to fit into the councils as "spiritual assistants" in accordance with the new legislation and spirit. However, autonomous government of the fraternities on the part of elected secular ministers and councillors has made considerable progress.

Certainly, restructuring and autonomy have borne fruit for the vitality of Secular Franciscan life, as is attested in the United States of America, where the restructuring into regional fraternities was recently completed.

Finance

Financial autonomy has a long way to go, as I said five years ago. The idea that everything must come cost-free is still strong, not only in those countries where foreign missionaries provided everything free of charge, but also in the rest of the world where the friars often provided for the slight financial requirements of the local fraternities.

Few Secular Franciscans, even in the "rich" countries, such as Germany and the United States, are themselves rich. The majority belongs to the middle class, and many are economically poor. St. Francis did not attract many rich people to follow him, and so it is today. In fact, he attracted many marginal people. There would be something seriously out of order if the SFO attracted mainly rich people and gave slight welcome to unimportant people.

I believe that the Minister General and Presidency have stated a sound principle: that even the poorest member can contribute something to the financial support of the fraternity. If every single one of the half-million members contributed a minimal something, the SFO would be much better off financially than it is at present.

The response of the National Councils to the International Secretariat's appeal to contribute to the support of the Order at the general level has improved over the past ten years, but it is still not general and is far from adequate. In 1986, only fourteen Councils contributed. In 1996, thirty-two out of eighty-eight national entities contributed, but not all these contributors were National Councils. There are forty-nine National Councils. This would seem to indicate that many National Councils do not receive financial support from their own base.

The response of a number of National Councils to the Presidency's appeal for funds for the promotion of the SFO in Eastern Europe and Northern Asia has been very generous. These National Councils already send their annual contribution to the International Secretariat.

Statistics

The most recent statistics of the Secular Franciscan Order were prepared before the General Chapter in 1996. Briefly, they are as follows:

According to continents:

Europe: 195,839; Latin America: 170,786; North America: 36,353; Asia: 24,451; Africa: 13,908; Oceania: 1,500. Total: 442,837.

According to language areas:

Spanish: 165,856; Italian: 126,098; English: 72,616; German: 34,586; Portuguese: 24,813; French: 18,868 (includes French-speaking Canada). Total: 442,837.

General Constitutions

Implanting the General Constitutions has depended on having them translated into many languages besides the official ones (English, French, Italian, Spanish). The work of translation is still going on, seven years after their promulgation in 1990. Because many Secular Franciscans have not yet received a

text they can understand, the Presidency asked for a prorogation of the definitive approval of the General Constitutions, to give the Order time to experience them.

The Constitutions have been put to use particularly in national elective Chapters, where the Minister General or her delegate, together with the General Assistant, has insisted on following the Constitutions. It would seem that this has been the first time that many of the National Councils have had to take the General Constitutions seriously. If one can make a general judgment from these encounters, it would seem that the General Constitutions are not well known.

They were long awaited, since 1978, and have been welcomed almost universally. The National Council of France has submitted a re-written text for consideration when the General Constitutions are definitively approved at the General Chapter in 1999. At that Chapter, the work on the final draft of the General Constitutions will be completed for definitive approval by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life.

The Secular Dimension

The General Chapter held in Mexico in 1993 concentrated on the secular dimension of the Secular Franciscan vocation. In my opinion, the secular dimension is best understood and lived by some in the secularized societies of Western Europe, of Asia and Oceania, and particularly in the United States.

Eastern European Catholics are sick of atheistic secularization, and many find it hard to understand the concept and the practice of Christian secularity. They yearn for a return to the church-life that they knew before the Second World War and before the Second Vatican Council. Some are deeply resentful of the changes brought by Vatican II and stress that they had no part in making those decisions.

Africans and Latin Americans want to sacralize their secular life. For example, especially in Africa, there is a desire to wear a religious habit, and, especially in Latin America, there is an intense devotion to the Blessed Virgin and the saints. Thereby, the members isolate themselves from secular life and create a holy space to live in.

Evangelization

Some fraternities have turned the corner from being inward-looking, devotional sodalities, unknown outside the four walls of the church, to being both prayerful and actively evangelizing. The national fraternity of the SFO in Italy, assisted by the Friars Minor, is an outstanding example of a large-scale evangelizing fraternity. Vietnam, Korea, the United States, and Brazil are noteworthy also.

The mission of the SFO is the same everywhere, as is the secular Franciscan vocation and charism. The vocation is to follow Christ in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi (cf. Rule, 1). The charism is to live in fraternity (cf. Gen. Const. 100.3). The mission is to "Rebuild my Church" (cf. Gen. Const. 100.1). Just how the mission is to be accomplished must be discerned by the people in the place. There is still a lot of discernment to be done by many National Councils.

Many would still think of Africa or Latin America as mission regions. But we are inclined nowadays to consider the whole world as "the region of the missions" and the entire Church itself as a missionary region.

The ideals and the theory have been worked out in the Rule and General Constitutions, which stress strongly that the members are first to be evangelized and then to be evangelizers. They are to be evangelized through following their vocation, through conversion and formation, and through spiritual assistance and animation. They are to evangelize others in the family, in the workplace, in the secular community, and in the church community, both in the local fraternity and beyond it.

What remains to be done in most national fraternities is to put the ideals and the theory into practice. The old Third Order model of privatized spirituality is still rather prevalent. Today's Secular Franciscans have to transcend the image of pious but ineffectual Tertiaries.

Spiritual Assistance

The religious major superiors and the spiritual assistants at all levels need to know the SFO General Constitutions better, so that they can help the Secular Franciscans to be more aware of their need to be evangelized and to evangelize.

The Franciscan religious can help the secular Franciscans most of all by their example in being evangelized themselves and then in being the evangelizers of others. I am convinced that the friars could do much more to ensure that they live "in life-giving union" with the seculars (cf. SFO Rule, 1).

The Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the SFO, published in 1992, have yet to be applied to each national and regional fraternity. Like the Rule and General Constitutions that they are based on, they can be applied only to those national and regional fraternities where the Secular Franciscan Order has achieved unity.

Conferences of General Assistants, National Assistants, and Regional Assistants have been formed on the basis of collegial activity. They cannot function without the collaboration between the Ministers General, the Assistants General, the Ministers Provincial, the National Assistants, and the Regional Assistants.

To the extent that the Statutes for Assistance have been put into effect, the collaboration between the different obediences has been greatly strengthened. However, there is a great variation in collaboration, from none to total, depending often on the personalities of particular friars.

Franciscan Youth

The collaboration between the SFO and Franciscan Youth has been greatly strengthened in the past five years. The documents on Franciscan Youth, published by the Presidency of the SFO International Council in 1996, clarified the identity of the Franciscan Youth Movement and strengthened the collaboration between the SFO and Franciscan Youth in those places where they have been applied.

More National Councils, including the Council in the United States, have actively promoted the Franciscan Youth Movement and also Franciscan Children. The Presidency is working on making Franciscan Children an international movement.

Challenges and Priorities

The General Chapter, held in July 1996, did not propose priorities but it published its conclusions in the *Bollettino CIOFS*, 1996, n. 2. Under the headings, "Animate," "Guide," and "Coordinate," the Chapter indicated what it expected of the Presidency and the National Councils. From this, one can ascertain the Chapter's priorities—promote specialized formation; apply the principle of subsidiarity; stimulate communication.

The SFO is a cross-section of the local Church and of the universal Church. It is like the Church in miniature. Its challenges and priorities are the same as those of the universal and local Church. Articles 98 to 103 of the SFO General Constitutions make this point implicitly but strongly.

The SFO Fraternities at all levels will need to follow closely the statements delivered or written by the Pope and the Roman Congregations and by their local bishop or bishops' conference in order to discern their challenges and priorities in view of the Third Millennium. The Presidency of the SFO International Council intends to communicate regularly with all the Fraternities, in order to call them to reflect on the Church's priorities and to act with initiative.

Recommendations

Reviewing the Pauline Rule twenty years after and in view of the present situation of the Secular Franciscan Order, which exists in almost every country of the world, I would like to make some recommendations.

The local fraternity is where the Secular Franciscan enters the Order, follows his vocation and is formed initially and for the rest of his life.

The initial formation is most important. I would recommend that greater effort be put into it, both by the candidates and by the Fraternity Councils, especially the Formators and the Assistants.

The Fraternity Councils need a lot of strengthening. I would recommend that the members receive a specialized formation, so that they are able to govern the fraternity effectively and carry out the responsibility of deciding on the admission and profession of the candidates.

At the regional fraternity level:

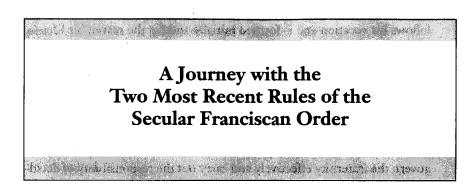
The regional fraternity is the key to the unity of the SFO in any national fraternity.

Often, the friars belonging to the different Orders who assist the local fraternities are the main obstacle to the unity of the regional fraternity. I would recommend that the friars cooperate by working in Conferences of National Assistants and in Conferences of Regional Assistants so as to give a collegial assistance to the regional fraternity and Council.

Competent secular leaders are often lacking at the regional level. Consequently, the National Council often tends to do the work proper to the Regional Council, such as providing for the canonical establishment of local fraternities. I would recommend that, instead of doing the work of the Regional Councils, the National Councils teach the Regional Ministers and Councillors how to do it and to be patient with them until they succeed in learning. I recommend that the National Councils also provide courses for the formation of the regional leaders, and that the Regional Councils be made competent to provide courses for the formation of local leaders.

Oh, how happy and blessed are these oven and women when they do these things and persevere in doing them, since the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and he will make His home and dwelling among them. They are children of the heavenly Father whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Francis, 1EpFid 5-7)



Richard Morton, SFO

To fully appreciate the present, you need to have knowledge of the past. For history illuminates the here and now with the light of understanding so the present may be seen as gift.

At all times the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the time and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel if it is to carry out its task. In language intelligible to every generation, she should be able to answer the ever recurring questions which men ask about the meaning of this present life and of the life to come, and how one is related to the other. We must be aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live.¹

The Beginning

In the 1960s, I found myself in a search to identify an organization or a movement within the Catholic Church that would satisfy my desire to deepen my spiritual life. For the spiritual dimension of my life seemed to be status quo, a situation which made me somewhat uncomfortable. Something was telling me that, as a never miss Mass on Sunday Catholic Christian, there must be more to church than just that minimum. In response to this discomfort, I joined several organizations and soon realized that they were not what I was searching for. Then one day, a Franciscan friar at our parish invited me to join six others and become a member of the first formation class for our as yet to be established local fraternity. He said, "Trust me, it's what you've been looking for." Little did I know where that simple "yes" would lead!

After the dutiful completion of the three months of postulancy and the twelve months of novitiate, I, and the others in the formation class, made our lifelong commitment on March 31, 1970. We professed: "In the presence of almighty God, in honor of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, of blessed father Francis and of all the saints, I promise to observe all the time of my life the commandments of God and the Rule of the Third Order instituted by the same blessed Francis, according to the form approved by Nicholas the Fourth and Leo the Thirteenth; also to satisfy at the pleasure of the Visitor, for transgressions committed against the same Rule." As I read these words today, my head spins in amazement. Did I really profess that? If those were the words of profession, what did the Rule and the Constitutions say?

To satisfy my curiosity and to refresh my memory, I recently perused a copy of the Rule and Constitutions of the Third Order of St. Francis for that time.³ What did I find? First, I found the Leonine Rule very prescriptive in nature with both it and the Constitutions using what would be considered today obsolete terminology such as: tertiaries, isolated tertiary, commissary, minister prefects, master of novices. The Ritual for Public Functions: Franciscan Third Order, which accompanied the Leonine Rule, was filled with Latin.

To give a flavor of the Leonine Rule, the first article addressed competency for membership. "Only those may be received as members who have completed their fourteenth year, and are of good character, peace-loving, and above all of tried fidelity in the practice of the Catholic Faith and in loyalty to the Roman Church and the apostolic see." ⁴ The second and third articles of the Rule addressed the fact that "Married women may not be received without the husband's knowledge and consent . . ." ⁵ and that "The members shall wear the small scapular and cord as prescribed; if they do not, they deprive themselves of the rights and privileges of the order. To highlight the focus on rights and privileges, there was an entire chapter in the Constitutions entitled Rights and Privileges, ⁷ containing thirteen articles.

In spite of the Third Order of St. Francis being an order with only secular membership, the administrative control of the order was in the hands of the friar spiritual directors. They had the final say, when they chose to exercise their authority, on all matters except financial.

Words we consider essential in any Franciscan Rule today were not contained in the Leonine Rule. Nowhere were such words as gospel, Jesus Christ, apostolate, prayer, formation, conversion, brothers and sisters, contemplation. When referring to the tertiary's prayer life, we find directives such as: "... recite the divine office" or "say daily twelve Our Fathers," "... attend Mass ..., "9 "say in common five decades of the rosary ... [and] ... pray with fervent charity for the eternal rest of the deceased." 10

Within a year and a half of my profession, I was serving as a Provincial Minister and began to attend the council meetings of the North American

Federation. The federation preceded the Pauline Rule and the National Fraternity as we know it today. In addition to the provinces in the United States, the federation included the SFO provinces in Canada.

The meetings of the federation tended to be somewhat stormy at times, what with the changes of Vatican II not being well understood nor appreciated by many of those in attendance. Also, there seemed to be an undercurrent of competition and differences in the expression of the nature of secular spirituality. Those differences were usually based on the differences found in the four different traditions of the friars. The resultant lack of unity was evident and carried over into the early National Fraternity days.

Reinforcing this sense of disunity was the provincial structure in which the local fraternities found themselves. All fraternities established by each First Order or Third Order Regular friar province were organized into provinces regardless of where they might be geographically located. This resulted in overlapping provinces in the same geographical area (up to seven in some cases). From an efficiency and understandability standpoint, this organization didn't make sense at all. But, most important, it did little to build a sense of unity among the members. There were many instances where two fraternities were located several blocks from each other and neither knew the other existed because they each belonged to different provinces.

This was the Order I professed to be a member of for a lifetime. I look back now and wonder why I ever decided to make such a commitment under the terms of the then extant Rule and Constitutions. Why were there so many directives and regulations? Where was the secular leadership? Where was the sense of unity? Was there a spirituality for seculars living in the world? Where was the Spirit hiding?

Transition

The Spirit continues to speak in various ways, not only in the ancient past but in more recent times as well. And so it was with Vatican II.

As a result of the mandates of Vatican II, a revised Rule (hereafter referred to as the Pauline Rule¹¹) for the now Secular Franciscan Order was written and approved. Thus, a new era dawned for the Order. Gone, with a stroke of a pen, was the Leonine Rule approved by Pope Leo XIII in 1883 with its outdated language, passé mentality, and other anachronisms. Also obsolete was the 1957 revision of the Constitutions. That document too had outlived its relevance.

The Pauline Rule was later supported by new Constitutions¹² for the SFO approved in 1990. These two documents are the foundation for an entirely new expression of the life and purpose of the SFO in the terms directed by *Perfectae Caritatis*. Taken together, they are a refreshing breeze that contained

the winds of change for a significant redirection and a fresh, new expression of the spirituality and organization of the former Third Order of St. Francis.

The Pauline Rule is very specific in directing the SFO to be more fully centered on living the gospel of Jesus in the spirit of its founder, St. Francis of Assisi. ¹³ The sisters and brothers are to be grounded in, and driven by, prayer and contemplation. ¹⁴ Areas of apostolic action are clearly identified in the Rule. ¹⁵ The Order is to be administered by its secular members in a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect with regard to the friars. A new, simplified organizational structure ¹⁶ helps to promote a sense of unity so each member is able to experience the oneness of the Order and its international scope.

New Beginnings

I was again serving as a member of a provincial council at the time the Pauline Rule was approved. Prior to its approval, some changes had already begun to occur. Perhaps the most noticeable at our provincial council meetings and possibly at many others, was the relinquishing by the friars of their dominance and/or control of the business of the council and the province. The provincial minister began to preside at the council meetings and carried an air of authority by doing so.

An interesting scene occurred at the first provincial council meeting after the promulgation of the Rule. The provincial spiritual assistant and the provincial minister acted out a short skit for the benefit of the council members to demonstrate the new relationship between the friars and the seculars. They both stood in front of the council, and the friar started speaking with the provincial minister saying very little. A copy of the Pauline Rule was brought forward and the speaking relationship between the friar and the minister changed dramatically. They began to speak the words alternately. This was meant to be a very graphic demonstration of the new relationship between the secular leadership and the friar spiritual assistants. It was to be one of "coresponsibility" and was later more fully articulated in the Constitutions. ¹⁷ I have never forgotten that occasion as it was an initial visible sign of that which was yet to be fully realized.

With the Rule came new terms defining and describing the change in the relationship between the friars and the seculars. In addition to the term coresponsibility, we find other new expressions on the vocabulary of the Order—"altius moderamen," life-giving union with each other," spiritual assistance," vital reciprocity." The resulting new relationship was the seed that began to sprout into a renewed spirit and sense of identity for the SFO as well as a new level of mutual respect, cooperation, and trust between the seculars and their brother friars. The harvest from this new-found relationship will continue to be fruitful for both the seculars and the entire Franciscan family.

In response to the realities of the new relationship between the seculars and the friars and to help reinforce a sense of unity among the SFO, a Conference of National Spiritual Assistants (CNSA) has been formed. The purpose of the conference is to coordinate the activities of the provincial spiritual assistants and to provide for the uniform application of their *altius moderamen*. The conference is comprised of one friar from each of the four different friar obediences.

Gradually, the real meaning of the organizational requirement of the Rule began to be understood. In October 1989, in response to a suggestion to the National Fraternity Council signed by five spiritual assistants, the Council embarked on the process of regionalization as mandated in Article 20 of the Rule describing the structure of the Order: "The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels: local, regional, national, international."

The key word is "regional" and not provincial. Regional describes an organization based on geography and not on the local fraternity's friars' province affiliation. Initially, there was significant resistance from both the secular and the friars about changing the structure of the national fraternity. However, the process of regionalization was successfully completed in October 1997. There is no doubt in my mind that regionalization was the work of the Holy Spirit. For, how could a significant reorganization of a body of over 18,000 members in over 750 local fraternities spread over forty-eight states, organized into over thirty provinces with each province having many years of history and unique cultures and traditions be accomplished with no significant problems and a two-page guideline document for direction if the Holy Spirit wasn't the primary architect and orchestrator of the process?

One footnote. From a retrospective viewpoint, the letter from the five friars was the beginning of a significant change in the influence the friars had on the decisions of the National Fraternity Council. Prior to regionalization, the friar provincial assistants, thirty plus in number, were permitted to vote on decisions of the National Fraternity Council and therefore had a major effect on the decisions of the Council. Since regionalization and the implementation of the new National Statutes, the four members of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants are the only friars entitled to vote.

With the Pauline Rule came the need to update completely all formation programs and material. This provided the impetus to develop formation material based on the results of Vatican II and the latest models used for the initiation of new members into the Church. Formation programs based on the RCIA model are available and use the latest models for adult learning. There is now a definite commitment to the necessity of substantial ongoing formation programs at all levels of fraternity within the Order.

The apostolic commissions have become another addition to the Order since 1978. They help focus the membership into four important apostolic

areas highlighted in the Rule:²² ecology, family, peace and justice, and work. Each commission now has its chairperson/co-chairperson at the national fraternity level with many regional fraternities doing the same. The commission chairs help to promote Franciscan values beyond the boundaries of the Order.

Much more could be written concerning the effect the Pauline Rule has had to date on the SFO than can be accommodated here. What I have attempted to describe up to this point are some of the more fundamental aspects of the transition from the old to the new as I have experienced them. To summarize. Initially, there was the need for change because the old was outdated. Then came the intervention of the Spirit in the life of the Church and in the Order to institute the needed redirection which included the Pauline Rule. The Pauline Rule then opened the doors for a secular spirituality to develop based on the life of Jesus of the gospels as modeled by St. Francis. In addition, it directed organizational changes that have resulted in the SFO becoming a more truly Secular Franciscan Order that is now responsible for its own administration. Let it suffice to say that we have only seen the beginning. Who knows where the Spirit will lead the followers of Francis?

The Future

And so the transition between the two Rules continues even to this day. With the advent of the Pauline Rule, a culture change was required to move beyond the Leonine Rule. This has been accomplished during the past twenty years during which the Pauline Rule has been in effect. However, there is still much that needs to be done if the totality of the spiritual depth of the Pauline Rule and the challenges it presents are to become an integral part of the life of the Order. We need to have each of the sisters and brothers move beyond just possessing the intellectual knowledge contained in the Rule and the gospel, for knowledge in and of itself, is not enough. I pray that this will happen as more and more of our sisters and brothers "let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do."

From my own experience and observations, I believe that the Pauline Rule has made it possible for the SFO to become a more viable, prophetic voice in the Church and in society. However, if the Order is ever to reach its full potential, much more needs to be done than has been accomplished thus far, both at the individual level and at the various fraternity levels.

Consider the following. Perhaps all SFO members can begin to believe beyond all doubt that the Lord dwells within them as the God within and then to believe that the God within moves them to seek the abundant fruits of fraternity in the midst of its many trials. Thus, supported by fraternity, they may be better able to move beyond their own self-imposed limitations as individuals. And then, utilizing the energy that fraternity gives, they may be driven with

far more passion to live the gospel life in all its ramifications.

The term refounding is frequently used to describe a process for institutions and organizations to find new life and purpose. They are told to return to their founding stories to recapture the excitement generated in the early history so as to be re-energized to address the issues of contemporary society at their very roots. To do so is to enter willingly into the Paschal Mystery (death) so that new life emerges. It is less about vision and planning and more about entering into the mystery of God's plan.²⁴ Perhaps, if this process were to be pursued by the various levels of fraternity, unimaginable forms of new fraternal and apostolic life would evolve.

We continue to be challenged as never before to develop a passion to live the gospel, to be on fire with the Spirit, and to take risks to go beyond our boundaries of comfort. For, how else will we be able to be more effective "instruments of peace" and love in the portion of the world into which we have been placed by the good Lord?

Endnotes

About Our Contributors

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Carl Schafer, OFM, a member of the Province of the Holy Spirit, Australia, was General Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order from 1985 to 1997. In that capacity he traveled extensively, working with Secular Franciscans throughout the world and editing the "Letter to the Assistants" in four languages. He is now stationed in the Holy Land.

William Wicks, SFO, is the present National Minister for the Secular Franciscan Order, USA. A member of the Order since 1981, he lives in Santa Maria, California, with his wife Francis, who is also a Secular Franciscan. They have five children and five grandchildren. Retired from his work of thirty years as a Systems Engineer, he is an active member of St. Anthony of Padua fraternity in Santa Maria.

Mary Zablocki, SFO, a registered nurse at Sisters' Hospital in Buffato, New York, has served as minister of her local fraternity and, together with her husband, Ed, has co-chaired the Work Commission of the National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order—USA, since 1995. Mary and Ed have two sons, Francis and Paul. Mary has contributed articles and poetry to New Covenant and to The Cord.

¹Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World." Gaudium et Spes. 4.

²Ritual for Public Functions: Franciscan Third Order (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1955), 36.

³Rule and Constitutions: Franciscan Third Order (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1959); hereafer referred to as the "Leonine Rule" and "Constitutions."

⁴Leonine Rule, 1:1.

⁵Leonine Rule, 1:2.

⁶Leonine Rule, 1:3.

⁷Constitutions, 4.

⁸Leonine Rule, 2:6.

⁹Leonine Rule, 2:11.

¹⁰Leonine Rule, 2:14.

¹¹Note that the name, Pauline Rule, is not the official title for the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order. I am only using it in this paper to avoid confusion with any previous Rule.

¹²The General Constitutions: Secular Franciscan Order (Menahga, MN: Franciscan Resources,

¹³Pauline Rule, 4.

¹⁴Pauline Rule, 8.

¹⁵Pauline Rule, 15-19.

¹⁶Pauline Rule, 20.

¹⁷General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, 95:3.

¹⁸General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, 85:2.

¹⁹Pauline Rule, 1.

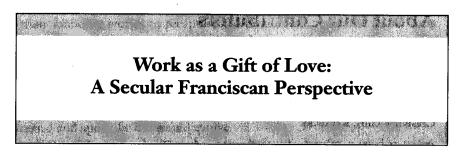
²⁰Pauline Rule, 26.

²¹Leon Bedrune, OFM, "Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order in the Church Today," Handbook for Spiritual Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order, 138, 3.

²²Pauline Rule, 15-19

²³Pauline Rule, 8.

²⁴Ref. Sr. Brenda Hermann, MSBT



Mary Zablocki, SFO

Work and the Original Sin

As far back as the first book of Genesis, we as a race have recorded the value of work. "God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good" (Gen.1:31). Everything God made was deemed good. All that was created was good, from the very first glimmer of light to the companions God created in man and woman. "God saw that it was good" is repeated over and over in the first account of the creation. (Gen. 1:1-31) Of course, we might say, it was good because it was of God. God created the world. God created man and woman, beasts and stars, water and land. This is nature. This is raw, unblemished, and untarnished life. Of course it is good.

God is not the only creator however, and even as far back as the book of Genesis, there is evidence that it did not take long for man and woman to contribute their own creations to the early world. Humans, tempted by the serpent, created not only the first sin, but the first need for discipline. There are those who would say they managed to ruin all that was good. Our sin, the original sin, blew us right out of the garden of Eden into the world of backbreaking labor. Is this not a punishment for all of us to bear?

Every generation since has borne the burden of work. We have been dominated by the weather, the tyranny of slavery, the need to feed ourselves, and to provide the necessities of life for our children. We have labored at everything from hoeing dry rocky soil to stitching tiny threads in airless sweatshops. We have worked frenetically in fear of the master who owns us; we have worked in freedom, becoming wealthy beyond any measure of justice. Since Adam and Eve were put out of the garden, we have worked. Since Cain murdered Abel, we have killed, maimed, and destroyed each other in the name of success,

profit, survival. We have robbed, pillaged and gone to war over the right to have what we feel is rightfully ours. We believe that what we work for is ours, and even what we inherit without working for is ours.

Generation after generation we have persisted in a pattern of thinking that diminishes the inherent goodness of work. We, like Adam and Eve, listen and are tempted by the same serpent. Our sin persists. We witlessly replace creative privilege with the relentless pursuit of power and knowledge. We embrace the knowledge of good and evil which was indeed, the original temptation, and armed with this knowledge use and manipulate our work as a means to further our knowledge and power to even greater heights. We have forgotten the divine element of work, and our role as caretakers of that which God has made (Gen. 2:15). Is it any wonder that we feel oppressed, rushed, and unfulfilled? Do we really need to look for reasons why we, in every generation, have exhausted ourselves from morning till night working?

Another View of Work

It seems hard to believe that the prevailing attitude about work throughout human history has been so negative. And yet, is it that hard? We cling with stubborn tenacity to the image of ourselves as fallen creatures, either blaming our sinful natures for our difficulties or exonerating ourselves from responsibility for our own behavior by blaming that same human condition. We sound like Adam and Eve, pointing out reasons why we fail to behave like God, when we were made in God's image as a pure act of love (Gen. 1:27).

If we go back to the passage in Genesis where we are recorded as being made in God's own image, we can present a case for the creative and redemptive character of our work. As images that reflect the person of God, we share in God's creative and redemptive role. References to work throughout Scripture reinforce this. It is the work of building an ark, mandated by Yahweh, that enabled Noah to share in God's renewal of the human race after the flood (Gen. 6:13-22). It is the cooperative work of human hands that built the great temple of Solomon (1Kings 5:19-26). Jesus used parables of workers in the vineyard (Mt. 20:1-16), servants investing their masters money (Lk. 19:11-26), and the sower in the field (Mk. 4:1-9). All of these stories teach lessons about how work fits into the divine plan.

Peter was working when he was called by Jesus, and Jesus used his livelihood to teach him about evangelization (Mk. 1:16-20). Jesus himself worked very hard, healing and comforting people, performing miracles and preaching. Even when he needed to rest, he was faced with more people who needed him ((Mt. 8:18, 23-27; Mt. 13:1-3; Mt. 14:22, 34-36). The last thing Jesus did before his night of agony in Gethsemene was an act of loving service. Not only

did he wash the feet of his beloved apostles, he used the act as a lesson of love for all time.

Francis and Work

It is no surprise then that St. Francis, whose heart was aflame with love, would take these passages from Scripture and make them his own. Francis, from the very beginning of his conversion, worked. He interpreted the words of Jesus, "Go rebuild my church," literally and began to pile one stone upon another to repair the Portiuncula and other dilapidated chapels around Assisi. Though he departed from his father's home in disgrace, leaving his father to run the business without his help, Francis never stopped working. Nowhere do we see the Poverello as an indolent wastral, destined to live a life of poverty because he would not work.

On the contrary, Francis is a stirring example of work at its finest. His work was as pure as the work mandated to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Unencumbered by the demands of an earthly master, Francis was free to do his work with love. Unfettered by the need to earn wages, Francis could give away his time and energy to do whatever needed to be done for God. Free of the burden of pride, jealousy, and resentment about his lot in life, Francis was able to sweat and labor at the most menial and degrading tasks all the while singing with joy. It was this type of free, pure work that Francis expected of his friars (RegNB 7; RegB 5).

All Francis did he did for God. And God in Francis's eyes was reflected in the faces of the homeliest, the dirtiest, the sorriest specimens of his society. It was Francis's deep love for God that enabled him to look at even the most flawed of beings and see, like God saw at the beginning of time, that it was good. Francis was so in love with God that he could not separate the created from the creator. He embraced not only the powerless lepers and the poor of Assisi, but the powerful church magisterium; and his love for priests is well documented (Test 6-9). It was this love that drew his brothers to him. It was the purity of his rule, based as it was on the gospels, that won him the approval of Rome.

What Francis wrote about work encouraged the brothers to continue to work at whatever trade they had practiced before they joined him, and he allowed them to keep the tools of their trade (RegNB 7). Francis wrote in his Testament: "And I used to work with my hands, and I [still] desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my brothers give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how [to work] learn, not from desire of receiving wages for their work but as an example and in order to avoid idleness" (Test 20-21).

Franciscans and Work

In the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, approved by Rome on June 24, 1978, there is an article devoted exclusively to work. Article 16 reads: "Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community."

Once again, in the eloquent language of this current rule for Secular Franciscans, we are brought back to the Scriptural designation of work as gift. We are exhorted to use this gift, but moreover to esteem this gift. We must be willing to take our work as gift and share it with others even as we receive their work as their gift to us. This agape, this exchange of talents, fosters in us a deep appreciation of the value of others' work. So often we allow ourselves to be tempted by pride in our work. While there is nothing at all wrong with satisfaction in a job well done we must never lose sight of the value of human work no matter what it is and who is doing it. If a genius, a master in his field, mistreats the woman who dusts his desk, then where is the redemptive value in his work? If a woman who has struggled to achieve a high ranking position takes every opportunity to diminish the value of men under her authority, where is her creative effort?

It is our calling as Franciscans to immerse ourselves in the Scriptures, particularly the gospel, and therein discover the true meaning of our work as creative and redemptive. It is our responsibility also to do our work in such a manner as to preach by example the gospel we love. We are the apostles of this century. We, along with every baptized Christian, are the anointed ones today. We are called in the words of Isaiah to be healers, liberators, bearers of good news (Is. 61:1-2). These words of Jesus are for us: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mt. 16:24). In the words of Francis, we again hear the same loving exhortation to carry on the work of creation and redemption: "I have done what was mine to do, may Christ teach you what you are to do" (2Cel 214).

Even in his last moments, Francis did not presume to teach his followers how to follow God. Instead, as always, he turned their focus on Christ, once again drawing them into the Scriptures he so loved, guiding them to find the truth in Jesus, the source and embodiment of truth.

Rule of the Secular Franciscans and Work

This is where we too, as followers of St. Francis centuries later, will find the way to do "what [we] are to do." Our Secular Franciscan rule is purposely non-prescriptive. It allows us to live our lives as members of society at large without dictating what we are to wear or eat or how often we must practice devotions and what those devotions must be. The Rule, by its very flexibility, places the responsibility for our relationship with God squarely on our shoulders, just as Francis did with his followers at the time of his death.

"Secular Franciscans should devote themselves to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel" (Rule, Art.4). It is in this careful reading of the gospels that we will find the way to do our work well, but Francis does not stop there. Just as he and his early followers loved and needed the sacraments, so we too are called to avail ourselves, particularly of the Eucharist.

"Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist" (Rule, Art. 8). Our active participation in the liturgy is essential to our spiritual nourishment, especially in our work lives. Surprisingly, the sacrament is about work. The word "liturgy" means "work of the people." In the beginning of this work we listen to the words of the Scriptures inspiring us, and if we open our hearts and minds, we take away not only inspiration but the graces needed to carry this sacred work into our secular lives.

At the offertory, we present the church with money, earned from the work of our hands; but richer still is the gift we carry to the altar of God. We offer bread and wine and then witness the celebrant blessing these gifts as fruit of the vine and "work of human hands." God makes the vine and God provides the fruit, but we make the wine. God provides the grain and the water and the salt for our bread, but it is the work of the baker that brings it in this form to the altar. As these symbolic gifts are carried reverently to the altar, so too are all of our efforts, our successes and failures, our dealings and fillings and faxings and deliverings, borne to the God who loves us. We give to God the fruits of our work, the work of human hands.

No matter how menial, no matter how little we are paid for our work, united with the gifts on the altar it becomes a part of the communal work of human hands. On the other hand, no matter how inflated our sense of self-importance, our work is present in the humble symbols of bread and wine. Regardless of whether we are vital to our jobs or whether our self-importance is unwarranted, on the altar of God our work is equal to the work of all other human hands. When the priest raises the bread and wine and consecrates them, changing them into the body and blood of Jesus, he is raising the symbols of our work, the work of our hands, and consecrating our efforts, changing them into the body and blood of Christ. What happens is more gracious than most of us realize.

This body of Christ, consecrated by the grace of God in the hands of the priest, is then fed back to the members whose work brought it to the altar in the first place. How wonderful to contemplate! How filled with joy we must be to know that we have helped create this wonderful miracle. How can we not

go singing in the streets knowing that we have played such a sweet intimate role in the redemption of humankind!

Sharing the Gift

Can we believe this? Can we take this and get in the car with it on Monday morning, drive with it to work, walk with it through our days and evenings, and sleep in peace and joy with it at night? Do we realize the power for good that comes with this grace? Do we even have a clue how magnificent this gift is? God is so good! It is no wonder the mystics weep and the martyrs go to their deaths singing for joy.

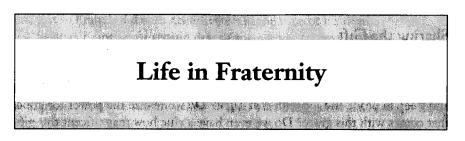
We have a mission. Our task is to challenge the naysayers and the overwhelming negative energy they spread. The beginning of this article is filled with the negative voices we hear all around us. It is our mission to love both work and worker so much that others will see God's greatness in both. We are called to be Christ on earth. We are well-equipped to do this, and nothing should stand in our way. Let us begin, for up until now we have done nothing.

San Juan Capistrano

So hauntingly beautiful, This tranquil mission. A thousand inspirations Await brush and pen. Rough adobe textures, Soft brilliant blossoms Fluttering dove sounds Amid the shadows. Muted bell songs In dappled sunlight. Fragrant honeysuckle, Fresh clean earth, **Ancient** willows And tiny giggling fountains Hiding in leafy alcoves. Like the swallow, I too must return. Francis just invited me.

Claire Campbell, 570

phael Fulwider, OSI



William Wicks, SFO

Introduction

"When the Lord gave me brothers, there was no one to tell me what I should do; but the Most High himself made it clear to me that I must live the life of the Gospel" (Test 14). As Secular Franciscans, the Lord gives us brothers, and sisters too. "The Rule and Life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...." We do this by "following the example of St. Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people."

Fraternity is the means by which, and the environment through which, we are called to live the Gospel. "The vocation of the SFO [Secular Franciscan Order] is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose, the members of the SFO gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities." Brothers and sisters are there to provide support and encouragement. They are there to teach. They are there to correct. They are there to help me live the Gospel, and I am there to help them live the Gospel.

This article will reveal three necessary aspects of fraternal life. It must be a community of love, it must be a place for ongoing conversion, and it must be a place of support for living the Gospel in the world. Referenced sources quoted in this article include the words, Friars, Brothers, Sisters, and men. These writings, which are filled with wisdom, are also applicable to brothers and sisters, men and women, of the Secular Franciscan Order. So please read these quotes with this redirect in mind.

Community of Love

The fraternity, summoned by the Holy Spirit in Christ's name, is an aspect of penitential life that is highly meaningful and irreplaceable. The brothers help each other to grow in the love of God through

reciprocal love, encouragement, fraternal correction, and so forth. Together they overcome difficulties, are freed from selfishness, and give witness of conversion to God.⁵⁶

Francis' writings suggests that he understood the gift of brothers as more than simply supportive instruments of the Lord. They were both necessary conditions and necessary expressions of the Gospel life, which demands witness to the Community of God's Love, that is, the Trinity. In order to bring to birth the "spirit of the truth of the Gospel," he needed brothers "according to the Spirit."

When the Friars or Sisters love each other mutually, the Spirit of God lives in them, and God Himself, the Father Almighty, the Son and Spirit set up their dwelling among them. As sons of the same heavenly Father, and as a unity, called to share the divine life, they are brothers of Christ. "Oh how holy and delightful . . . to have such a brother." Both in teaching and practice, Francis has given birth to a fraternal life which is intense and rich with overtones."

The fraternity, first and foremost, must be a community of love. In her testament, St. Clare tells us: "Loving one another with the charity of Christ, let the love you have in your hearts be shown outwardly in your deeds so that, compelled by such an example, the sisters may always grow in love of God and in charity for one another."

An important quality of community is the lived experience of togetherness (that "unity of mutual love"). . . . The implications of this quality for life in community are as follows.

- a) Community is a gift to be discovered and lived out; it is dependent upon the urgings of grace and the demands of God's initiative, and not just upon one's own categories of acceptance, whims of decision, or choice of partners.
- b) Community is based upon a free and responsible acceptance of a call; it is togetherness because of personal self-giving, willful decision, and the obligation flowing from intimacy, not just legislation or communal structures. It is a concrete expression of "one body, one spirit in Christ," the being of "one mind and one heart," not a togetherness based upon regular observance or uniformity.
- c) Community life has to reflect the Father's loving us intensely, his choosing us to come together in Jesus Christ, his giving the energy of the Holy Spirit to restore all things in Christ.
- d) Life in community recognizes the dignity of every person to be a chosen child of God, to be redeemed by Christ, to have the potential to respond to the Spirit's urging, to be the artisan of one's

own world, to embody a unique blend of characteristics or talents." 10

"The fidelity and authenticity of our commitment, manifested to community, provides a model for those in the world of what a life with God can mean and demonstrates to them the possibilities of their own hearts to strive for holiness." The earliest Franciscans, "free from all selfish love, poured all their affection into the heart of the community." Fraternal love displays a unity for the world to see.

The unanimity of the sisters [Poor Clares], "possessing the one love, united in spirit and ideas" (Phil. 2:2) was the countenance of God's gentleness, the sacrament of God's tenderness, the witness of God's kindly regard. . . . As Jesus prayed, "that they may be one in us [so] that the world may believe that you sent me" and "that their unity may be complete [so that] the world [may] know . . . that you love me" and "that your love for me may live in them and I may live in them" (Jn. 17:21, 23, 26), so life in community is meant to both show and secure the gentle, loving, and caring presence of the Most High." 12

The Challenges of Fraternal Life

But unity is not easy to come by. A fraternity is made up of all kinds of people, and we are not all alike. These differences should be respected. Mary Ann Julian, SFO, writes:

Our fraternities are the nurseries where God prepares, nurtures, and strengthens us for our work in the world. In these "gardens of love," all plants (us) are unique, varied, purposeful. Each has the capacity to give honor to God and to benefit others in some way. Now temptations blow through the garden and often the way we "rub against each other" causes us to become irritated. If we rely, or take pride, in our own gifts, friction and division will occur. If we learn to die to self and submit to the loving care of the Gardener (and our lawful superiors), His beauty, His love, and His peace will increase in us and overflow to all the world.¹³

Lester Bach, OFM Cap., also indicates that all is not peaches and cream:

The community will experience the Exodus experience again and again. Some problems persist beyond their time. Failure is not easy to handle. . . . We will have more than our share of humanness. Still, we are committed to create a climate where humanness is

understood and accepted. On the other hand, we have good celebrations. We have prayer experiences that move us to tears of joy. We are gently surprised by the dedication of a brother and sister. We are impressed with the joy of one who suffers. We realize our strength as a people dedicated to Jesus, willing to "keep on keeping on" no matter what the price. We learn so much from the example of others in the community. It is good to know we are not alone on this pilgrimage to God. We learn about Jesus through the honest sharing in community. We learn to celebrate the ordinary gifts that life brings. We find joy in our covenant with the poor. Service brings us satisfaction. New members bring us happiness in seeing another person answering the Gospel call of Jesus. When Sister Death calls someone home, we gather together both in grief at our loss and thanksgiving for eternal life. When our experience helps someone else, the gift is mutually satisfying.¹⁴

Patti Normile, SFO, writes: "Any house, whether a structure or a spiritual home, must be tended in order to thrive and survive. Our spiritual houses—families, parishes, communities [fraternities] and nations—must be cared for by people who love them." ¹⁵

Personal Conversion and Apostolic Responsibility

In addition to being a community of Love, a fraternity should be a place of conversion and a launching pad for apostolic activity of the members. Chapter 3 of our Rule, entitled "Life in Fraternity" (life with brothers and sisters), tells us that

the local fraternity . . . becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of us members. ¹⁶

The commentary in the booklet, From Gospel to Life, states: "The local fraternity is the basic living organism of the whole Secular Franciscan Order and a visible sign of Church in miniature. . . . It is the center for spiritual growth, apostolic outreach, and loving union among members."

The above paragraph alludes to two facets of our Fraternity Life—our internal calling and our external calling, our internal spiritual growth and our external apostolic works. Both are important for our life as Secular Franciscans.

There are two expectations that all of us should have for our life in fraternity. One, our fraternity should be a place where we are offered an opportu-

nity for conversion, for spiritual growth. Two, we should be provided support and encouragement for the life that we live outside of fraternity—our life of Gospel living. These two are connected as understood by our Rule, paragraph 4, which calls us to go from Gospel (conversion) to Life (apostolate).

Other opportunities for conversion may come from reading holy writings, especially those written by and about St. Francis and St. Clare. Conversion can also come by participating in liturgy, by listening to our brothers and sisters, and by the experiences that we encounter in our daily lives, especially when we are involved in apostolic action.

Means of Conversion

The Eucharist should be the center of life in fraternity.

The plan of penance and ongoing conversion involves the choice of participating fully in the Eucharist so that the Body of Christ—Head and members—will become a main source of support and accountability for one's decision to bring renewal through the cross: "and receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ." The Eucharist as covenant, sacrifice, meal, celebration, community-builder, reconciliation, and life-style is a primary experience of intimate Real Presence to activate and actualize the union between the penitential person and the loving Lord.¹⁸

A fraternity, which would really be a symbol and means of conversion to God, comprises:

 A serious and constant effort at union among the brothers who are called by God to the life of penance.

The responsibility on the part of each religious to see the brothers as the first friends of his life, a life which he or she has willingly chosen through the inspiration of God. The first Franciscans "long to meet each other and are happy to stay together."

The need on the part of each individual religious (secular) and
of everyone at the community level to unfailingly use those
means which further fraternity and union with God.

 The good will to eliminate those obstacles which challenge the very meaning of fraternal life, these being: individualism, autonomy, self-centeredness, self-motivation, absenteeism, dissatisfaction, and so forth.¹⁹

The Apostolic Life

The outer journeys—journeys into the world, the external calling, the apostolic life, the going from Gospel to life—are the other side of the spiritual

coin of the internal/external calling indicated by our Rule of Life. For Francis the realization of this outer calling was a moment of his conversion.

When Francis set out to live "according to the form of the holy Gospel," he came to understand this twofold requirement, although there were dark moments when he could not see his way clearly. However, once he realized that he could not live for himself alone but had to live for others, too, his commitment to spreading the Gospel assumed more importance than the call to the solitude of a hermitage which he had felt at the time of his conversion. He came to see that he had to travel through the world preaching and sharing the treasures he had discovered, which was Christ and His Gospel. . . . Yet his path of penance [pilgrimage] was not to be the solitary road of the recluse but rather the turbulent highway of everyday life along which he would travel with all classes of people, with whom he would share his Gospel experience as a beacon to guide them to their destination in heaven. ²⁰

Francis used to tell his friars that their vocation was not so much to seek their own salvation as to go through the world exhorting others more by their example than by their words; that is, they were to give example of light to those wrapped in the darkness of sin.²¹

He calls us to a Franciscan way to live the Gospel. "I council, admonish and exhort my brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ, that, when they go about the world, they do not quarrel or fight with words, or judge others, rather, let them be meek, peaceful and unassuming and humble, speaking courteously to everyone, as is becoming.²²

While remaining faithful to our Franciscan heritage, especially in preaching, we shall have to approach the problems of our modern apostolate in a very different way. The society we live in is no longer the united Christendom of the Middle Ages, in which religion entered every phase of life—culture, ideology, etc. Today, a secularist society is regarded as the logical norm, and the faith is seen as a personal choice not always favored by the world around us.²³

While the apostolic plans of the first fraternity were suited to the needs of their time and place, they are not pertinent to today's world. Yet, when we examine the early friars' activities, we can see—and endeavor to live by—the Gospel values which inspired and sustained them and which generally speaking, were as follows:

The example of our Gospel life—In a society in which there are already too many words, it is difficult to communicate the Gospel message by using long sermons and convincing arguments. If our words are not supported by the way we follow Christ in our daily lives, they are just so much more meaningless noise. Our apostolate, preaching the Gospel in the modern world, will retain its original freshness and vitality only if we ourselves are living by the words we preach.

Spreading the Gospel rather than administering the sacraments— The "new evangelization" now so emphasized in the Church is the result of an awareness that the Christian world has become "de-Christianized" in spite of its long sacramental history. Yet the urgent need for this new evangelization should not cause us to fall into the trap of thinking that all we have to do is return to the past. If we are to spread the Gospel today, we must first believe that it can be done. To think otherwise would be to deny that God is present through His Spirit in the world in which He has placed us. Being with those who have been marginalized by poverty and lack of opportunity-Traditionally, and with good reason, we Franciscans have been regarded as "men of the people." Still, we must do more than support the ordinary people in their simple faith, important though that duty is. We must, in addition, lead them to accept that living the Gospel has ethical consequences in the life of even the humblest member of society."24

Fraternity as Pilgrimage

Fraternity is a place of internal and external pilgrimage. We, as fraternity, walk together on the road of life encountering moments of great and small conversions and rejoice in these moments. We encounter opportunities of grace in the lands of everyday life, just as the pilgrims of the Middle Ages encountered opportunities of grace on their physical journey to far away lands. In today's culture, the lands of everyday life can be just as alien as those faraway lands. The opportunity for entering into the Paschal mystery is just as real today as it was during St. Francis's time. This is why we need the support of fraternity.

Pilgrimage . . . was often taken to be a sacramental in the Middle Ages; certainly, it often mediated grace to the changing person in a changing world. . . . The notion of pilgrimage, for our own time, has many manifestations. Certainly there are still thousands of persons who embark on holy journeys with the intention of seeking help from God and the Saints for their troubled lives. While

these journeys may lack some of the extremely risky possibilities of medieval pilgrimages, they nevertheless have their own discomforts and even dangers—and thus can be experienced as true penitential practices leading to significant conversions in life.²⁵

Benedictinism and Bernard of Clairvaux moved the idea of pilgrimage to a journey one undertakes in the heart and a need to keep oneself unentangled from the snares of the world. . . . When Francis exhorted his brothers to live as pilgrims and strangers in this world, he summoned images of Abraham, Jesus, and the holy men and women of the early Christian tradition. . . . Francis did not conceive of pilgrimage as exclusively an inner journey, but as an inner journey which corresponded to an outer one.²⁶

Fraternity members are fellow travelers on these inner and outer journeys. They may add balm to spiritual bruises and elation to spiritual successes: our moments of personal conversions. They share the ups and downs of the journey with each other.

The Spiritual Assistant

I would be remiss if I failed to underscore the importance of the Spiritual Assistant role in the enrichment of Fraternities. The Friars or Spiritual Animators (religious, diocesan clergy, or certified Secular Franciscans) contribute to the Fraternity by their participation as an equal member of the Executive Council, provide ongoing formation, preside at the liturgies, and, most important, are present with us at our gatherings.

Conclusion

The very nature of the Franciscan charism begs for fraternity. Whenever Seculars get together, fraternity is experienced. In the conduct of the business of the Executive Council, fraternity is formed. Even though the National Fraternity Council meets once a year, the meeting is always like an annual family get together with newly-elected members being welcomed like long lost relatives. Regional fraternities periodically conduct days of recollections or weekend retreats. There, family is formed. At our recent Quinquennial Congress, participants were divided into small fraternities for periodic sharing relative to the daily presentations. By the end of the Congress we cared so much for each other that parting was difficult. It is as if we are all related, all belong to a large family, a family with Francis as our spiritual father.

But the basic unit of the Order is the local fraternity. This is the privileged place where we are involved in apostolic and social activities, where we experi-

ence spiritual growth, and where we experience family love. May St. Francis and St. Clare and their communities continue to be an inspiration to us in our life in fraternity.

Endnotes

¹Habig, Marion A. St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies; English Omnibus of the Sources for the Life of St. Francis of Assisi (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1973), 68.

²The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (Linsburg, KS: Barbo-Carlson Enterprises), para. 4. ³Rule, para. 4.

⁴General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order—USA (Ordered through Franciscan Resources), Article 3, para. 3.

⁵Lino Temperini, TOR, *Penitential Spirituality in the Franciscan Sources*, (Franciscan Publication, 1983), 29.

⁶Note: Replace the words "Friars," "Brothers," "Sisters" with "brothers and sisters" and "men" with "men and women of the Secular Franciscan Order."

⁷Regis Armstrong, OFM Cap. and Ignatius Brady, OFM, Francis and Clare: The Complete Works (Paulist Press, 1982), 17.

8Temperini, 29.

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¹⁰Benet Fonck, OFM, To Cling With All Her Heart to Him: The Spirituality of St. Clare of Assisi (Franciscan Press, 1996), 55.

¹¹Fonck, 52.

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¹³Mary Ann Julian, SFO, "A Message for the New Year," (The Doorkeepers Notebook—Fr. Solanus Casey Regional Newsletter, Winter 1998).

¹⁴Lester Bach, OFM Cap. Catch Me a Rainbow—The Franciscan Journey (Linsbory, KS: Barbo Carlson Enterprises, 1990), 291.

¹⁵Patti Normile SFO, Following Francis of Assisi: A Spirituality for Daily Living (Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press), 100.

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¹⁷From Gospel to Life: The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, With Commentary (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1979), 29.

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¹⁹Temperini, 30.

²⁰Julio Micó, OFM Cap., *The Spirituality of St. Francis*, trans. Paul Barrett, OFM Cap., Ch. 11, "The Franciscan Apostolate."

21Micó.

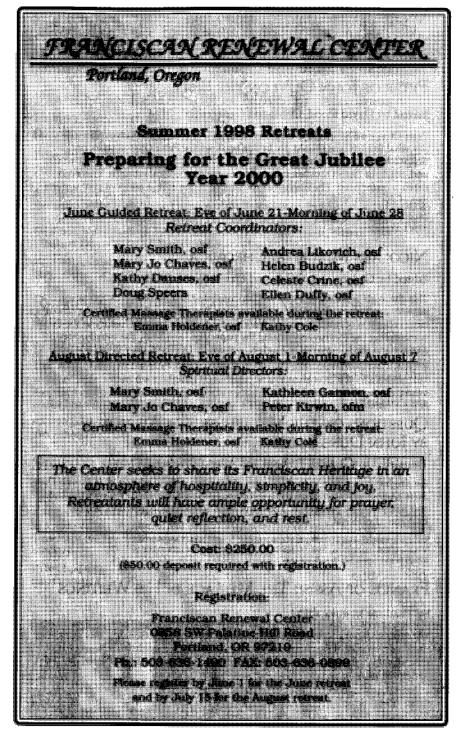
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²⁵Elise Saggau, OSF, "Editorial," The Cord, 47.1 (Jan./Feb., 1997), 1.

²⁶André Cirino, OFM, "The Assisi Experience of 'Spirituality of Place," *The Cord*, 47.1 (Jan./Feb., 1997), 4.



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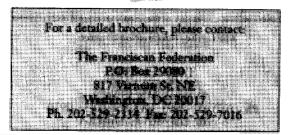
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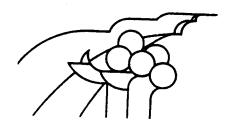
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Saturday, May 23

Rebirth of a Charism, Federation Seminar on TOR Rule. At Marycrest Retreat Center, Denver, CO (see ad, p. 149).

Friday, May 29-Sunday, May 31

Franciscan Studies: The Difference Women are Making, Washington Theological Union. Regis Armstrong, Maria Calisi, Margaret Carney, Ilia Delio, Paul LaChance, Dominic Monti, Roberta McKelvie, Elise Saggau, Gabriele Uhlein. Contact: Linda Dougherty, 6896 Laurel St., NW, Washington, DC 20012; ph. 202-541-5235.

Saturday, May 30-Saturday, June 6

On Being Simply Human. Retreat, with Michael Blastic, OFMConv. \$350. At Tau Center, 511 Hilbert St., Winona, MN 55987; ph. 507-454-2993, fax 507-453-0910; taucentr@luminet.net.

Sunday, May 31-Saturday, June 6

Lord, Teach Us To Pray. A retreat with Berard Doerger, OFM. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Saturday, June 20

Rebirth of a Charism, Federation Seminar on TOR Rule. At Felician Sisters, Chicago, IL (see ad, p. 149).

Saturday, June 20-Friday, June 26

Environmental Health Conference, sponsored by Secular Franciscan Order, USA. At Graymoor Christian Unity Center, Garrison, NY. (See ad p. 153.)

Saturday June 20-Friday, June 26

Heeding the Call of Jesus. A retreat with Joseph Rayes, OFM. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, June 21-Saturday, June 27

Jesus at the Heart of Life: Discovering the Joy of Being Human. A retreat with Nicholas Lohkamp, OFM. At Franciscan Renewal Center. Contact: Pat Meyer, OSF, 321 Clay St., Carey, OH 43316, ph. 419-396-7970.

Sunday, July 5-Saturday, July 11

Harvesting the Power of the Spirit. A retreat with John Petrikovic, OFMCap. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs. Contact: Marilyn Uhing, OSF, 7665 Assisi Heights, Colorado Springs, CO 80919-3836, ph. 719-598-5486.

Sunday, July 12-Saturday, July 18

The Way of Desire: The Human Journey into God, with Adele Thibaudeau, OSF, and Jerry Schroeder, OFMCap. At Siena Center, 5635 Erie St., Racine, WI 53402-1900; ph. 414-639-4100, fax: 414-639-9702.

Friday, July 24-Friday, July 31

Carrying the Hermitage in our Hearts, with Michael Higgins, TOR. \$350. At Tau Center, Winona (see ad, p. 150).

Sunday, August 9-Saturday, August 22

LIFE Program, with Joseph Rayes, OFM, and Madonna Hoying, SFP. At Mount St. Francis, Colorado Springs (see ad. p. 151).

Friday, August 14-Saturday, August 22

The Soul's Journey Into God. A retreat with Andre Cirino, OFM, and Josef Raischl. \$400.00. At Stella Maris Retreat Center, Skaneateles, NY. Contact: Stella Maris Retreat Center, 130 E. Genesee St., Skaneateles, NY 13152.

Monday, August 17-Thursday, August 20

33rd Franciscan Federation Conference. At Hyatt Regency Hotel, Milwaukee, WI. Contact Franciscan Federation, P.O. Box 29080, Washington, DC; ph. 202-529-2334 (see ad p. 148).

Writings of Saint Francis

Adm	Admonitions	FormViv	Form of Life for St. Clare
BenLeo	Blessing for Brother Leo	1Fragm	Fragment of other Rule I
CantSol	Canticle of Brother Sun	2Fragm	Fragment of other Rule II
EpAnt	Letter to St. Anthony	LaudDei	Praises of God
EpCler	Letter to the Clergy	LaudHor	Praises to be said at all the Hours.
EpCust	Letter to the Custodians	OffPass	Office of the Passion
1EpFid	First Letter to the Faithful	OrCruc	Prayer before the Crucifix
2EpFid	Second Letter to the Faithful	RegB	Later Rule
EpLeo	Letter to Brother Leo	RegNB	Earlier Rule
EpMin	Letter to a Minister	RegEr	Rule for Hermitages
EpOrd	Letter to the Entire Order	SalBMV	Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
EpRect	Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples	SalVirt	Salutation of the Virtues
ExhLD	Exhortation to the Praise of God	Test	Testament
ExhPD	Exhortation to Poor Ladies	TestS	Testament written in Siena
ExpPat	Prayer Inspired by the Our Father	UltVol	Last Will written for St. Clare
•	, ., .,	VPLaet	Dictate on True and Perfect Joy

Writings of Saint Clare

1LAg	First Letter to Agnes of Prague
2LAg	Second Letter to Agnes of Prague
3LAg	Third Letter to Agnes of Prague
4LAg	Fourth Letter to Agnes of Prague
LEr	Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges
RCl	Rule of Clare
TestCl	Testament of Clare
BCl	Blessing of Clare

Early Franciscan Sources

ICel	First Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
2Cel	Second Life of St. Francis by Thomas of Celano
3Cel	Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano
AP	Anonymous of Perugia
CL	Legend of Clare
CSD	Consideration of the Stigmata
Fior	Fioretti
dV	Witness of Jacque de Vitry
LM	Major Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
_Min	Minor Life of St. Francis by Bonaventure
LP	Legend of Perugia
_3S	Legend of the Three Companions
roc	Acts of the Process of Canonization of St. Clare
SC	Sacrum Commercium
SP	Mirror of Perfection