

Franciscan Journey chapter 11 notes

The OFS Rule

Rule Article 1

The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church,² unites all members of the people of God—laity, religious, and priests—who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.

In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

Commentary

This first chapter details the place of the Secular Franciscan Order in the Church, the Franciscan Family, and in the history of the Order itself.

The first paragraph shows how the Franciscan Family, as one of the many spiritual families in the Church, is united with all the people of God by the call of the Holy Spirit and the following of Jesus Christ. Still, in addition to this, the way of Francis gives the Franciscan Family, with its common charism but varied expressions, a distinctive cast, as it strives for holiness and binds together the laity, religious, and clergy in the life and mission of the Church.

Franciscan Family

- We are a family in the international Franciscan family: common Franciscan formation programs, part of local fraternity, deepen relationships, care and concern for one another.

... many spiritual families

- Within the Church, the Franciscan family draws together laity, religious, and clerics who recognize their call to follow the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi.
- Franciscan spirit, Franciscan vision

... life-giving union

- We work together in the world as an example of the Franciscan charism
 - The word charism (from Gr. χάρισμα) denotes a gift freely and graciously given, a favor bestowed, a grace.
 - CHARISM: A specific gift or grace of the Holy Spirit which directly or indirectly benefits the Church, given in order to help a person live out the Christian life, or to serve the common good in building up the Church (CCC 870)
 - Members of an order share in the charism of its founder.
- Goal of formation is to be aware of what a Franciscan charism looks like in people.

Rule Article 2

The Secular Franciscan Order holds a special place in this family circle. It is an organic union of all Catholic fraternities scattered throughout the world and open to every group of the faithful. In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge

themselves to live the gospel in the manner of Saint Francis by means of this rule approved by the Church.

Commentary

The second paragraph identifies the Secular Franciscan Order as a vital part of the whole family of Francis and points out its special secular character. It also stresses that all the necessary prerequisites are present to make it an official Order within the Catholic Church.

Constitutions article 1.4, 1.5

- Franciscan First Order (OFM) and Third Order Regular (TOR) are responsible for the pastoral care and spiritual assistance of OFS.
- ***altius moderamen*** – literally “higher governance” - a Latin term used to mean that the friars of the First Order and Third Order Regular are to guarantee the fidelity of the OFS to the Franciscan charism, communion with the Church, and union with the Franciscan Family, values which represent a vital commitment for the Secular Franciscans. (*General Constitutions of the OFS, Article #85.2*)

Constitutions article 3.2, 3.3

- Laity contribute to building up the Kingdom of God in the world.
- Vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion = fraternities.

... strive for perfect charity in their own secular state

- Perfect charity allows free reign for the Spirit to reveal the need for conversion in our personal lives. To achieve this goal requires self-knowledge and reflection and the power of the Holy Spirit.
- “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” This is demanding material, part of the Gospel that we Franciscans profess to follow.

Rule Article 3

The present rule, succeeding “Memorale Propositi” (1221) and the rules approved by the Supreme Pontiffs Nicholas IV and Leo XIII, adapts the Secular Franciscan Order to the needs and expectations of the Holy Church in the conditions of changing times. Its interpretation belongs to the Holy See and its application will be made by the General Constitutions and particular statutes.

Commentary

The continuity with past rules, its influence in today’s world, and its approval by the Church are discussed in this third paragraph. This rule is the fourth expression in eight centuries. It makes the unchanging principles of Franciscan gospel living applicable and relevant today. The leaders of the Church constantly guide this movement from gospel to life.

Constitutions article 4.1, 4.2, 4.3

- Governed by universal law of the Church.
- Purpose of Constitutions is to apply the Rule and to set conditions for belonging to the OFS, and its government and organization.

Constitutions article 5.1, 5.2, 5.3

- Interpretation of the Rule and Constitutions belongs to the Holy See, General Chapter, Presidency of the International Council (CIOFS).

Constitutions article 6.1, 6.2, 6.3

- Statutes of each level of fraternity established by the next higher level.

Authority to proclaim the good news comes from Jesus

- Franciscans trust the Trinity to provide what we need.
- Sense of poverty: dependence on the Trinity.

OFS Rule

- The various articles of the Rule spell out our way of life.
- Our vocation requires us to be faithful to the entire Rule.

Saved in Hope - (*Spe Salvi*) - Pope Benedict XVI - Paragraph 27

Anyone who does not know God, even though he may entertain all kinds of hopes, is ultimately without hope. Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life.

The Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) Vatican II - Para. 34-35

Man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness; a mandate to relate himself and the totality of things to Him Who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and Creator of all.

The norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfill it.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church - (*Lumen Gentium*) - Vatican II - Para. 42

- "God is love, and he who abides in love, abides in God and God in Him."
- The faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God's grace.
- All the faithful of Christ are invited and have an obligation to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state.

Scripture reflection: *Ephesians 3:14-21*

Paul is saying that every family owes its origin to God. The fact is that there are degrees of living in Christ and of having Christ live in us. There is plenty of room for growth here, and Paul is praying that his readers may go all the way, allowing Christ to live in them to the fullest and to shape their thinking, feeling, and acting. For Paul, faith means more than mere mental assent; the Apostle is praying that his readers may believe, trust, obey, and be faithful to Jesus, so that he may live in them more and more. *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*