

Franciscan Journey chapter 12 notes

The OFS Rule

Rule Article 4

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this; to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth to which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.

Commentary

The second chapter of the rule is a thorough and detailed description of the Secular Franciscan way of life...

Paragraph 4 summarizes the heart of the rule: the very core of the gospel life in intimate union with Christ, or, in the words of St. Paul, "the life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me" (Gal 3:20). And so, the Secular Franciscan, alive with the spirit of Francis, knows and experiences the Lord Jesus intensely, binding one's own person with the person of Christ.

Jesus Christ is the heart of our faith

- Through Jesus...

- we are given the way to live our lives.
- we find forgiveness.
- we find wisdom.
- we discover relationship.
- we learn the ways of the Father.
- we are brought together in a community founded on love.

The Incarnation

- Franciscan theology: God is LOVE, actions flow through love. Therefore, Jesus came among us because God desired to be with the people he loved and the earth God created. (Theology developed by Bl John Duns Scotus.)
- Alternative theology: Incarnation was the result of the sin of Adam and Eve.
- God looks for ways to free us from sin and experience the joy of unity with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- The cross becomes a clear sign of the extent of God's love for us. Francis recognized God's love in everything Jesus said and did.

Knowledge of the Gospel

- Article 4 calls us to observe the Gospel, which requires a careful reading of the Gospel to absorb its spirit. Reading and listening are combined in one faith-action.

- Sharing the good news requires good content and passionate faith. This, in turn, requires ongoing formation.
- Share the Good News AND establish some level of relationship with our listeners.
- Jesus teaches us what we need to know and do to achieve union with the Trinity and one another.

Mary's dialogue at the annunciation as a model of dialogue with God

- Mary responded to God's word with a faith-filled "Yes."
- Her dialogue with God's messenger was friendly, confident and prayerful.

... going from gospel to life and life to the gospel

- Franciscans face the task of linking scripture and the life and words of Jesus to their own lives.
- Francis understood the primacy of Jesus and sought to imitate what he saw in and heard from Jesus.
- Faith casts a new light on everything and makes known the full ideal which God has set for humanity, thus guiding the mind towards solutions that are fully human.
- Jesus is the model to be followed. Jesus chooses his Father's way even when he is free to make other choices.
- Example of Francis:
 - Welcomed sinners as Jesus did.
 - Embraced Lady Poverty as Jesus taught disciples not to let things deter ministry.
 - Preached forgiveness as Jesus did.
 - Went to quiet places to pray as Jesus did.
 - Welcomed Sister Death as Jesus accepted death and resurrection = hope.

Our task is to offer the world an example, in our lives, of what the Kingdom of God looks like.

- Building the Kingdom of God takes planning and faith, courage and gentleness, understanding and compassion.

SFO Constitutions – Articles 10 & 11

- Christ is the greatest manifestation of the love of God for humanity.
- In imitation of Francis, learn the purpose and the way of living, loving, and suffering.
- Accept the will of the Father even under the most difficult circumstances.
- Live the Franciscan spirit of peace, rejecting every doctrine contrary to human dignity.
- Desire above all things the Spirit of God at work within us.

Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*) – Paragraph 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 must be prepared to confess Christ before men.
- All the faithful of Christ are invited and have an obligation to strive for the holiness and perfection of their own proper state.

Francis of Assisi, The Saint – Admonition I – pp. 128-129

- "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father except through me."
- Each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest.
- "Behold I am with you until the end of the age."

Scripture reflection: *Philippians 2:1-11*

Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

- Compare with the Admonition of Francis above:

Each day He humbles Himself as when He came from the royal throne into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down from the bosom of the Father upon the altar in the hands of a priest.

Christ is the focus of the meditation, which follows the storyline of his Incarnation, his humiliation, and his exaltation. The lines are rich in theological as well as moral content, as they articulate the mystery of Christ and set him forth as the model for Christian living. Reflection on Christ the “servant is meant to inspire us to be servants of one another. The hymn depicts Jesus as the Suffering Servant of Isaiah. In the disturbing vision of the prophet, this messianic figure submitted himself to the violence and abuse of his people until he poured out his life in sacrifice for human iniquity. Some theologians also detect a subtle contrast between Jesus, who humbled himself to become man, and Adam, who asserted himself in order to become like. *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible*

The Christ hymn in Philippians is one of the most moving and comprehensive statements about the Christian life in the NT. It says that the one who could claim equality with God, and all the power and position and glory and prestige that came with it, “emptied himself” of that equality, a mystical term of complete self-renunciation. Jesus chose “downward mobility.”

It is only through chosen acts of self-emptying, only through looking to others' welfare as well as our own that we are brought into the sphere of Jesus, his life and his power. It is in imitating his *kenōsis* [self-emptying] that we are “raised up.” *Sacra Pagina*

This self-emptying is an example of God's infinite goodness in taking the initiative to meet man: “Fill yourselves with wonder and gratitude at such a mystery and learn from it. All the power, all the majesty, all the beauty, all the infinite harmony of God, all his great and immeasurable riches, God whole and entire! was hidden for our benefit in the humanity of Christ. The Almighty appears determined to eclipse his glory for a time, so as to make it easy for his creatures to approach their Redeemer” *Navarre Bible*, quoting St Josemaría Escrivá, *Friends of God*