

Franciscan Journey chapter 15 notes

Gospel, Conversion, and Reconciliation

Rule Article 7

United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance,” and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of the radical interior change that the gospel itself calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s Mercy and the source of grace.

Commentary

The next section of the rule (7 and 8) explains the personal disposition or preconditions (conversion and worship) necessary for achieving the union with Jesus Christ and with one’s neighbor described above.

An ongoing change of heart or a continual spiritual renewal is the first condition for modeling one’s own thought and deeds on those of Christ. As Francis himself points out in his letter used as the prologue, if we all love the Lord with all we are, build a eucharistic community, and remove those things that prevent such a union, we become one with him, fulfill the Father’s will, and project his image onto the world. Thus, our daily conversion becomes a primary means for putting on Christ and conforming ourselves to him. The sacrament of reconciliation, then, is a privileged means and practical assistance for achieving this objective.

Love one another in deed and truth.

Penance

- Franciscans are brothers and sisters of penance.
- Committing to radical interior change which the gospel calls conversion.
- Recognize areas of life where we need conversion.
- The light of Christ enlightens us about things that keep us from enriching relationships with Jesus and other people.
- Human frailty makes daily conversion necessary.
- Challenge: “Let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ.”

God became human

- God is moved by love to embrace us, and deliberately chooses to be with us.
- Came to us in poverty of crib, without trappings of power.
- Francis saw this as the greatest kind of love.
- Led Francis to be totally generous in response to God’s love.

Gospel Stories

- Jesus healed a man paralyzed for 38 years on the Sabbath – sought new life for the man.

- Jesus ignored man-made laws – story of the Samaritan woman. Asking for a drink initiated a conversation that eventually led to her conversion. Jesus teaches them that the food and water that nourishes him is to do God's will.
- Healing of man born blind – Jesus challenge teaching that blindness was caused by sin of the man or his parents. A lot of things changed for the man once Jesus healed him. His conversion and belief in Jesus as Messiah stood in contrast to his parents and the Pharisees who refused to acknowledge or believe.
- These stories are dynamic and have brought people to real penance and conversion.

Reconciliation

- Sacrament of Reconciliation reflects the mercy and compassion of Jesus.
- Jesus calls us to forgive not 7 times but 77 times.
- Intimacy with Jesus brings to light our obstacles to growth.
- We are constantly called to do better.
- In the process, we acknowledge the holiness of God.
- It is important to uncover the roots of our sinful words or actions.
- Return to God's love as the source of holiness.
- If you have been unjust, judgmental, hurtful, biased, created walls between people through your words and actions - CHANGE!

Teachings of the Ordinary Magisterium, *Sacramental Guidelines*

- List of documents related to the norms for Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- A major norm was this: communal celebration of the sacraments is preferred to more private celebrations.
- This conciliar norm, however, has been juxtaposed with almost an opposing regulation by the ordinary magisterium which time and again stresses "private" confessions.

Recognize Sin – Praise God's Mercy – *U.S. Catholic Catechism for Adults*

- Sacrament of Penance is an experience of God's boundless mercy and challenges us to have the same kind of compassion and forgiveness toward those who sin against us.
- "It is in pardoning that we are pardoned."
- The New Testament is filled with calls to conversion and repentance.
- Each time we see the crucifix, we can reflect on the infinite mercy of God.
- The Sacrament helps us stay close to the truth that we cannot live without God.

God is Love (*Deus Caritas Est*) – Pope Benedict XVI

- The Church is God's family in the world.
- The teaching of the Letter to the Galatians is emphatic: "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (*Galatians 6:10*).

Penitence and Conversion (section 17) - *FUN Manual*

- Conversion is a complex process of transformation involving various conscious movements of the human person. Transforms the entire human person.
- Conversion is caught up in the mystery of grace operating within the human person.
- Conversion is a journey of discovery.
- Personal biography offers a unique understanding of conversion through various stages and crises.
- The Christian Scriptures refer conversion by two Greek words: *metanoia*, a turning from sin, and *epistroph*, a turning toward God.
- Parallel between the conversion process of RCIA and initial Secular Franciscan formation.
- From the RCIA, and the process of initiation that it supports, several insights about conversion can be noted:
 - conversion is symbolized as a journey of transformation led by the movement of God.
 - it is a communal experience involving the entire community in its encouragement and witness.
 - the RCIA considers conversion as an ongoing process, celebrated in stages and finding its greatest Christian expression in the celebration of the Eucharist.
 - conversion is not a one-time experience but rather a lifetime transformation that is absorbed in appreciating the mystery revealed in Christ.
- Moral conversion – choosing the good.
- Religious conversion – love unconditionally.
- Francis's plan was to devote his life to doing penance.
- Francis wished to rebuild the Church but to do so not through criticism but rather through holiness of life.
- First Letter to the Faithful:
 - Love God.
 - Love our neighbor,
 - Resist sinful tendencies.
 - Receive the Eucharist.
 - Live in conformity with our conversion.