

Franciscan Journey chapter 20 notes

Freedom to Love

Rule Article 12

Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.

Commentary

The result of simple living in gospel poverty is freedom to seek and share the great treasure of the kingdom: loving God and neighbor.

Search for meaning of life:

- Beliefs: We base our lives on truths bigger than ourselves.
- Practices: We articulate why we do what we do.
- Narratives: We share the stories that unite and motivate us.

Franciscan movement handed down to us through narratives. (*Build with Living Stones*)

"... set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters"

Freedom attains its proper perfection when it is directed toward God. (*Compendium Catechism*)

Choice to do evil leads to slavery to sin = loss of freedom.

Freedom makes us responsible for our actions.

Freedom within framework of laws and regulations, rules, structures.

Law givers: Society, churches, employers, families.

Religion is Gospel oriented:

- Needs law and structure to create an atmosphere of freedom for Gospel living.
- This freedom allows us to respond to the Gospel according to the call of the Spirit.
- Can change law / structure with respectful dialogue and reverence.

Family rules to guide healthy family life, safe environment.

Companies set work rules to improve efficiency, profits, safety.

The atmosphere created by structures is meant to support growth rather than interfere with it. Freedom functions best within a framework that is respectful.

Our freedom is given direction by the Rule. The Rule creates a structure which guides daily decisions.

Free ourselves of opinions that label people, cannot tolerate anything that causes separation among people.

Love = maturity and concern for the "other" with help from the Holy Spirit.

“Witnessing to the good yet to come”

We choose a gospel way of living before any others.

Faith, hope and charity will be bright lights in our lives.

“Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity.” – *Evangelii Nuntiandi* Paul VI - Paragraph 14

“... acquire purity of heart”

Cleanse our mind, heart, emotions and actions of anything that hinders the love of God working through us.

Ignatius Study Bible:

Matthew 5:8: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

the pure in heart: Those who act with integrity and serve the Lord unselfishly. In biblical terms, the heart is the hidden center of the person where one's thoughts, words, actions, and emotions are said to originate. A pure heart is undefiled by evil and lustful thoughts (5:27–30; 15:18–20) and finds its true treasure in heaven (6:19–21). In eternity, the pure in heart will see God as the angels do even now (18:10; 1 Cor 13:12; Rev 22:4). Catholic theology calls this unmediated union with God in heaven the Beatific Vision (CCC 2517–19).

Purity of heart enables us to see the things that bind people.

We initiate actions that will bring people to freedom.

We show the Franciscan spirit by the life we lead.

OFS Rule – Freedom directed by the Rule:

- What to choose and what to reject.
- What to do and what to leave undone.
- When to support others in finding their way.
- How to move to contemplative prayerfulness.
- Discovering the need to change to promote relationships.

Profession is a free response to the Holy Spirit, a choice to live within framework of Franciscanism.

Joy results from love of God spills over into love of all creation.

Responsible Practice of Freedom -- US Catholic Catechism for Adults - pp 310-311

Human freedom is more than a capacity to choose between this and that. It is the God-given power to become who he created us to be and so to share eternal union with him. This happens when we consistently choose ways that are in harmony with God's plan.

The best way to grow in freedom is to perform good acts.

Saved in Hope (*Spe Salvi*) – Pope Benedict XVI – Paragraph 24 a and b

Freedom is always new and he must always make his decisions anew.

Every person and every generation is a new beginning.

Freedom requires conviction; conviction does not exist on its own, but must always be gained anew by the community.

Freedom must constantly be won over for the cause of good.

Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People - (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) - Paragraph 4

While fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they are not to separate union with Christ from their lives. By performing their work according to God's will, they grow in that union.

"Whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (*Col. 3:17*)

Impelled by divine charity, they do good to all men.

Following Jesus in His poverty, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor inflated by their abundance; imitating Christ in His humility, they have no obsession for empty honors (*cf. Gal. 5:26*) but seek to please God rather than men, ever ready to leave all things for Christ's sake. (*cf. Luke 14:26*)

The laity who have followed their vocation and have become members of one of the associations or institutes approved by the Church try faithfully to adopt the special characteristics of the spiritual life which are proper to them as well. They should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist.

F.U.N. Manual – Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, page 36 of 46

Bonaventure: God is Good. Scotus: God is Love.

This article of our Rule calls us to be God-like.

We are to put aside those issues, those possessions, those fears that keep us focused on our self so that we are better able to focus on the other.

Bonaventure's notion of *kenosis* (self-emptying love) as self-giving comes to the fore.