

Franciscan Journey chapter 23 notes

Justice and Franciscan Life

Rule Article 15

Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

Commentary

The second grouping (15–19) of the ways Secular Franciscans spread the gospel and witness to Jesus Christ deals with concrete action. Not only does gospel living take place in a special lifestyle, but it also expresses itself in a specific mode of apostolic activity or ministry.

The first particular aspect of the Secular Franciscans' evangelical action is social justice (15), both on the individual level and on the level of community participation. They must show justice themselves and motivate justice in others, not just in their private lives but also in the public forum of politics, business, economics, and the like. This mandate for advancing social justice as an organized group overturns previous prohibitions against a public common expression of rights when it is carried out as a means of demonstrating the convictions of faith.

Constitutions 22.1, 22.2, 22.3

- **“individually”** - Collaborate for passage of just laws..
- **“collectively”** - Fraternities should engage in field of human development and justice, offer fraternal service to victims of injustice.
- Renunciation of violence.
- Interventions inspired by Christian love.

Gaudium et Spes

- Respect for the human person
- Duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every individual.
- Crimes against human dignity poison civilization.

“in the forefront” – Franciscans get involved: observe, judge, act.

“promoting justice” – Justice in light of relationships

- Trinitarian spirituality places relationships at the top of its values.
- Injustice = failure to support relationships.
- When Franciscans desire to act justly, they are asking themselves to do the things that create and sustain relationships.
- Justice is based on good relationships that seek the good of the other person.
- Realize how destructive negative words and attitudes can be.

Justice also refers to our relationship with God

- Our Franciscan spirit lives in a world created by a God who loves all people and the earth on which they live.

Use of force

- The inevitable consequence of the use of force is destruction of some sort. It causes separation among people that can take years to heal.
- Franciscans must speak up, but we will never use violence as a way of dealing with injustice.

Franciscan approach

- Franciscans work for justice without dividing people into good and evil.
- Franciscans strive to bring people together in a society known for its dedication to justice.
- Franciscans will get truthful information, approach the parties with care, concern, and respect – acting in ways that achieve the goals we seek. We want people to live together peacefully after serious dialogue.
- Work for both individual victims of injustice and for social systems that support justice.

Matthew 25:34-40

- Judgment at the end of time: "just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

Franciscan organizations that promote peace and justice in our world

- Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation (JPIC)
- Franciscan Action Network (FAN) – advocacy focuses on people-needs, showing care and concern (Love).
- Franciscans International (FI) – global needs of the poor and others without a voice.

Scripture reflection: 1 Timothy 6:3-19

- First section of this reading (false teaching) relates to sources of injustice.
- "Love of money is the root of all evils" = major source of injustice.
- Second section (true riches) in contrast...
- Shun the desire to be rich; aim at righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith.
- To the rich in this world: Charge them to set their hopes on God who richly furnishes us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good deeds, liberal and generous, thus laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed.

Navarre Bible commentary: Material things, which God gives in abundance, are not bad in themselves, nor is it forbidden to enjoy them; but they need to be used with a sense of social responsibility, with detachment, because true wealth is that which never perishes.

"Francis and Franciscan Spirituality" – Poverty & Joy – Wm. Short, OFM – pp 30-32

- For Francis, penance was love, and sorrow 'perfect joy.'
- He was for them a living example of what he taught... by his example as well as his words: 'he made his whole body a tongue;' 'more than someone who prayed, he had become prayer'... That is, his whole person had become the message he was trying to communicate. The message was Jesus.

- If there is one word which does complete justice to Franciscan theology and spirituality, it is 'Christocentric,' and they have this as their distinguishing feature, because the faith and holiness of St. Francis were totally centered on Christ. In Jesus Christ the revelation is made to us of what the world, as a whole and in all its parts, means to God.

The Anonymous of Perugia – Chapter IV – *The Founder* – pp 41-42

- "Let us go through the world, encouraging and teaching men and women by word and example to do penance for their sins and to remember the Lord's commandments."
- Some will receive the message with joy and love, others will not. "Resolve in your hearts to bear all these things with patience and humility."

Love, Rules and Grace – *US Catholic Catechism for Adults* – page 318

- Legalism leads to unproductive moralizing.
- Love must be the essential foundation of the moral life.
- Christian moral life begins with relationship with God, covenant love made possible by the sacrifice of Christ. Requires grace.

FUN Manual – Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation

- OFS Rule, Gospel living, and Catholic Social Teaching go hand in hand.
- Based on seven themes of social teachings:
 - Life and dignity of the human person – we are all made in the image of God.
 - Call to family, community, and participation – we are both sacred and social.
 - Rights and responsibilities – right to basic needs, responsibility to ensure rights.
 - Option for the poor and vulnerable – put their needs before our own.
 - Dignity and rights of workers – participate in creation
 - living wage, humane conditions, ability to organize and join unions.
 - Solidarity – interdependence, commit ourselves to the common good.
 - Care of God's creation – stewardship, right to clean water and air, beauty of nature.
- An authentic interpretation of the Ten Commandments must include the moral precepts of Justice and Charity.
- In the Great Commandment in Mt 2: 34-40 and the Last Judgment Mt 25: 31-46 we discover discipleship and our solidarity with the whole of humankind.
- Fourth Commandment – relationship between those in authority and those in their charge.
- Seventh Commandment
 - justice and charity in the care of earthly goods and the fruits of men's labor.
 - respect for the integrity of creation: Animals, like plants and inanimate beings, are by nature destined for the common good of past, present, and future humanity.
- Integration of our commitment to Gospel living, OFS Rule defines our identity:
 - keener awareness of God's presence and power which dictates our actions;
 - there is a hunger for deepening our relationship with the Divine;
 - there is an ability to make the right choices out of a faith conviction;
 - the ability to reconcile is an integral part of one's life;
 - imitation of Jesus in His compassion becomes part of our nature;
 - we become people of sure and certain hope.
- Everything we do is concerned about serving God. Therefore, even the small day to day volunteering, work at a local food pantry, soup kitchen... list is endless and varied.
- Second part of the section relate the OFS Rule with Catholic Social Teaching.