

Franciscan Journey chapter 28 notes

Fraternities: Gathering as one

Rule Article 20

The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels—local, regional, national, and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this rule and of the constitutions.

Commentary

Ordinarily, the gospel life of Secular Franciscans outlined in the second chapter is developed and sustained within the framework of an organized community, called a fraternity, in each locality. Hence, “fraternity” is the topic of chapter three (20–26). These fraternities are living and active communities. They serve as expressions of loving and trusting relationships between members and as a legal unit of government. They exist on various levels and have their own special character (20). They are given life and particular characteristics by their local needs (21). They exist with the approval of the Church (22) and are nurtured by new members who have been prepared for commitment (23). Their meetings and contributions express their will to and sense of community (24–25). Their spiritual growth is developed through the assistance of clergy and religious (26).

Constitutions article 28.1, 28.2, 28.3

- Origin in the inspiration of St Francis – Most High revealed the essential quality of life in fraternal communion
- Various levels – promote union, mutual collaboration, active and communal presence in local and universal Church
- Gather in local fraternities

Constitutions article 29.1, 29.2, 29.3

- Fraternities at various levels: local, regional, national, international
- National councils give guidelines concerning the motivations and the procedures to be followed.
- National statutes provide criteria for organization
- Application left to the prudent judgment of the leaders of the fraternities

Code of Canon Law – Canon 303

- Lead an apostolic life, strive for Christian perfection under higher direction (*Altius Moderamen*)

Structure

- Franciscan vision needs structure to assist in implementation
- Structures promote and serve, not hinder, the Franciscan vision
- OFS is a Public Association of the Christian Faithful
- Pastorally and spiritually assisted by the First Order and Third Order
- OFS is autonomous – three features: autonomy, unity, and secularity

Constitutions article 1.5, 2.1, 99.2

- Fraternities at various levels: local, regional, national, international
- Specific vocation gives form to the life and apostolic activity of its members
- If bound to another religious family of institute of consecrated life cannot belong to OFS

Privileged Public Association

- Special responsibilities to the Church and to the Franciscan Family
- Mission to be a model in our inner life in the Church and outreach to the world
- Franciscan vision brings a particular spirit to the Church and the world
- Profession consecrates us, we choose not to be influenced by world's non-gospel values
- In that sense, Franciscans "leave the world"

Profession

- Profession incorporates people into the
- Much of Franciscan life takes place at local level, but part of an international Order
- We express the Franciscan vision in the circumstances in which we live and work
- All of us contribute to building the Kingdom of God and rebuilding the Church
- According to John Paul II, Church desires/expects:
 - model of organic, structural and charismatic unity
 - community of love
 - courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life
 - bear personal witness before all in the environment in which you live
 - In virtue of your profession, the Rule and General Constitutions must represent for each one of you the reference point for everyday experience, on the basis of a specific vocation.
 - high measure of ordinary Christian life
 - family is primary environment, give within it space for prayer, the Word of God and Christian catechesis
 - live marriage fully in keeping with God's plan
- Profession is not the end of formation, it is the beginning of a life lived in fraternity that requires regular conversion and ongoing formation.
- God's love accompanies us on the journey

Participation in Fraternity

- Participation in fraternity life is essential for belonging to the OFS
- Cooperate in building a vibrant community that models Franciscan life
- Regional and national fraternities unite local fraternities with international fraternity
- Servant leadership – strive to animate Franciscan life in fraternities at all levels
- Goal is unity and understanding, respectful and attentive dialogue
- Whenever Francis spoke to people, or birds, or wolves, he always began with these words:
"May the Lord give you peace."

Scripture reflection: *Romans 8:26-39*

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

As it is written,

*"For your sake we are being killed all the day long;
we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- The Spirit adds his voice to the chorus of groans rising up from this valley of tears, translating our wordless moans and sighs into filial petitions to the Father. Paul expects readers will find this a comforting thought.
- At some point God called us to faith in Jesus Christ. Thereupon he justified us by his grace, making us righteous in his sight, and even glorified us by infusing his Spirit to dwell within us.
- The disciples of Jesus... have crosses to bear. In fact, it appears that Paul's list of afflictions in *Rom 8:35* deliberately evokes the covenant curses that sin brings on the world: anguish and distress (*Deut 28:53, 55, 57 LXX*), persecution (*Deut 28:25, 29-34*), famine (*Lev 26:26; Jer 29:18*), nakedness (*Deut 28:48; Ezek 23:28-29*), and the sword (*Lev 26:25; Ezek 21:8-9*).
- Suffering faithful are taken up into the mystery of Christ's passion, an event where the curses of the past are turned into blessings for the future. They too experience the curses of pain and death in a redemptive way that brings them into closer conformity with the crucified and risen Messiah.
- Nothing in the created universe, in any of its domains or dimensions, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Charity as a responsibility of the Church - (Deus Caritas Est) -Paragraph 20

- Love of neighbor is a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practice love.
- Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community

Franciscan Prayer - Ilia Delio, OSF - Page 113

- Through the Spirit, we are to take on the Word in our own lives so that we become the Word
- When we allow the Word to take root within us through prayer and the indwelling of the Spirit then we bring the Word to life
- when we allow the Word to take root within us through prayer and the indwelling of the Spirit then we bring the Word to life. In Frances' view, nothing is to hinder us from this vocation nor should we desire anything else: "Let us desire nothing else, let us want nothing else, let nothing else please us and cause us delight except our Creator, Redeemer and Savior, the only true God, let nothing hinder us, nothing separate us, nothing come between us."

A Mirror of the Perfection - The Prophet - Chapter 24 - Page 275

- This story points out the importance of prayer and work – emphasis on our relationship and work for God rather than living according to the flesh