

Franciscan Journey chapter 7

History of OFS and Development of the Rule – Questions

1. Please read The Earlier Exhortation ... (Prologue to the 1978 Rule) and share a brief, personal understanding of the text.

The Earlier Exhortation was incorporated into the Prologue to the 1978 Rule. It begins with a description of the Gospel life, with phrases lifted directly from Scripture. They describe the ideals of Christian life, the promised reward to those who persevere, and the nature of our relationship with Christ. It concludes with a prayer that the followers of Francis be sanctified and saved.

2. What quotes in this chapter were most helpful for your understanding of the SFO way of life? Why?

Quotes that were most helpful to understanding the Franciscan way of life:

- a. We are called to be "leaven in our secular sphere and witnesses to poverty, love, joy, peace, marital fidelity, obedience to the Church, apostolic Christocentrism, and sincere devotion to the Virgin Mary." This is a good, concise description of the Franciscan way of life.
- b. Not a quote, but the description of the process of developing and approving the Rule of 1978. I hadn't considered before the challenge and back-and-forth involved in writing the Rule. I guess I had envisioned something akin to the way the Ten Commandments were delivered, already fully formed.

3. What is the nature of the commitment you will make to live the SFO Rule? How long? How strong? How lived?

Profession in the OFS is an irreversible, lifelong, and total commitment to the life described in 2.a. above.

4. Why is the SFO Rule of 1978 so important for this time of history in the Church and the world? What is our gift to the Church?

Christ's command to Francis to rebuild the Church is reflected in the Rule of 1978. It is important in our time in the history of the world in that the Rule calls us to be faithful servants as described by Christ in the Gospel. This at a time when secular society seems to call people to greater and greater levels of selfishness. We help to fortify the Church, which is attacked on all sides by the attitudes of the world.

5. Describe the nature of the relationship between the friars (1st Order / TOR) and the Secular Franciscan Order.

First Order, Third Order, and Seculars form a single Franciscan family, closely related by a common origin, heritage, and charism. Seculars are called to take the Franciscan ideals into our day to day lives.

6. Scripture reflection: Matthew 5:13-16. How do these biblical words relate to Franciscans and the way they follow the Rule they profess?

Matthew 5:13-16: "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men. "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Ignatius Study Bible: 5:13-14 Two illustrations show that disciples must be true to their calling lest they render themselves useless for the kingdom. Being the salt of the earth, they are to season and preserve the world with peace (Mk 9:50) and gracious speech (Col 4:5). Being the light of the world, they are to bear witness to Jesus and his message (Jn 1:9; 8:12).

Both images have links with the OT. Salt is associated with the covenant of priesthood made with Aaron and his descendants (Num 18:19) as well as the covenant of kingship made with David and his descendants (2 Chron 13:5). Light is associated with the OT vocation of Israel to make the truth and justice of God shine out to all nations (Is 42:6; 49:6). 5:14 a city set on a hill: An allusion to Jerusalem on Mt. Zion. It is a visible sign of the eternal city that awaits the saints in heaven (Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 21:2). Back to text. 5:16 your Father: Earlier chapters make no mention of the Fatherhood of God. In the Sermon on the Mount, however, Jesus calls God "Father" a total of 17 times (chaps. 5-7).

God's Fatherhood is the deepest mystery of his identity; from eternity he fathers a divine Son (Jn 1:1), and throughout history he adopts us as his children in Christ (Jn 1:12; Gal 4:4-7).

Sacra Pagina - Matthew: 13. **salt of the earth:** Salt was used to give flavor to food (see Job 6:6), to preserve it, to purify, and as part of sacrifices (see Lev 2:13; Ezek 43:24). The second person plural forms carry on the mode of address begun in 5:11-12. Though salt does not lose its taste, it may become adulterated so that its taste is weakened (see Pliny, Natural History 31.44, 95).

14. light of the world: The background is Isa 2:2-5. The light image is part of the invitation to Israel: "O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord" (2:5). In Isa 42:6; 49:6 Israel's vocation is to be a "light to the nations." Paul picked up this theme of Israel's vocation in Rom 2:19 ("a light to those who are in

darkness"). The light imagery is developed in the sayings in 5:15–16 in which Jesus' followers are challenged to active engagement in their "good works." The goal of these works is that other people might come to praise God (5:16). The epithet "your Father who is in heaven" (5:16) is characteristically Matthean in comparison with the other NT writers and is a typical Jewish way of talking about God in prayer.

city set upon a mountain: If there is an allusion to Isa 2:2–5, there is also an allusion to Jerusalem built upon Mount Zion. The OT envisions all nations coming to the city of Jerusalem to learn the Torah, with the result being perfect peace. See K. M. Campbell, "The New Jerusalem in Matthew 5:14," *SJT* 31 (1978) 335–63.

Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture - Matthew: 5:13–16 Jesus summons his disciples to be what God's people were always meant to be: salt of the earth and light of the world. Salt was used to flavor and preserve food. Through living the beatitudes, Jesus' disciples become salt of the earth, preserving goodness in the world. The disciple who does not embody the beatitudes is like salt that loses its taste: he becomes no longer good for anything. Similarly, the disciples are to be light of the world. In the Jewish tradition Israel was to be a light to the nations (Isa 60:1–3; Bar 4:2). Jesus calls his disciples to fulfill this role by living the beatitudes in such a way that the world may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father.

Reflection and Application - In the face of the many problems in the world—violence, materialism, poverty, moral relativism—Jesus challenges us to ask, "What can I do to share God's love in the world?" Christians are called to be light to the world, and the world will be impacted for better or for worse by the way we live our lives. When we as Christians fail to be saints, when we fail to live the beatitudes and be light, the world suffers. But when we imitate Christ's love, mercy, and generosity, the world will see our good deeds and glorify our heavenly Father (5:16). Though evil may still flourish in the face of saintly witness, we should always consider what good we can do to serve the coming of Christ's kingdom in this world. St. John Chrysostom invites us to ponder what the world would be like if the entire Christian community lived in imitation of Christ: "Assuredly, there would be no heathen, if we Christians took care to be what we ought to be; if we obeyed God's precepts, if we bore injuries without retaliation, if when cursed we blessed, if we rendered good for evil. For no man is so savage a wild beast that he would not run forthwith to the worship of the true religion, if he saw all Christians acting as I have said."