

General Constitutions – Articles 17 & 18; National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscan Order USA (NAFRA); Reprinted by Permission

Article 17:

1. *Rule 6* Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission", secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.
2. The preparation of the brothers and sisters for spreading the Gospel message "in the ordinary circumstances of the world" and for collaborating in the catechesis within the ecclesial communities should be promoted in the fraternities.
3. Those who are called to carry out the mission of catechists, presiders of ecclesial communities, or other ministries, as well as the sacred ministers, should make the love of Francis for the word of God their own, as well as his faith in those who announce it, and the great fervor with which he received the mission of preaching penance from the Pope.
4. Participation in the service of sanctification, which the Church exercises through the liturgy, prayer, and works of penance and charity, is put into practice by the brothers and sisters above all in their own family, then in the fraternity and finally through their active presence in the local Church and in society.

For a Just and Fraternal Society

Article 18

1. Secular Franciscans are called to make their own contribution, inspired by the person and message of Saint Francis of Assisi, towards a civilization in which the dignity of the human person, shared responsibility, and love may be living realities.
2. *Rule 13* They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.
3. *Rule 13* They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.
4. Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person.

The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul; Discernment of St. Francis -- The Founder – Chap. XV – Page 259; Ed. by Regis Armstrong, J. Wayne Hellmann, & Wm. Short; New City Press, 1999; Reprinted by Permission

One night while all were sleeping, one of his flock cried out: "*Brothers! I'm dying! I'm dying of hunger!*" At once that extraordinary shepherd got up, and hurried to treat the sick lamb with the right medicine. He ordered them to set the table, although filled with everyday fare. Since there was no wine – as often happened – they made do with water. Francis started eating first. Then, he invited the rest of the brothers to do the same, for charity's sake, so their brother would not be embarrassed.

Once *they had taken their food in the fear of the Lord*, so that nothing would be lacking in this act of charity, the father wove for his sons a long parable about the virtue of discernment. He ordered them to *season with salt*

every sacrifice to God. With concern he reminded them that in offering service to God each one should consider his own strength.

He insisted that it was just as much a sin to deprive the body without discernment of what is really needed as, prompted by gluttony, to offer it too much. And he added: "Dear brothers, realize that, what I just did by eating was not my own choice, but an exception, demanded by fraternal charity. Let the charity, not the food, be an example to you, for the latter feeds the belly while the former feeds the spirit."

The Minor Legend of St. Francis - Sixth lesson – The Founder – Pages 696-697; Ed. by Regis Armstrong, J. Wayne Hellmann, & Wm. Short; New City Press, 1999; Reprinted by Permission

Through the love of the most sublime poverty, the man of God prospered and grew rich in holy simplicity. Although he certainly possessed nothing of his own in this world, he seemed to possess all good things in the very Author of this world. With the steady gaze of a dove, that is, the simple application and pure consideration of the mind, he referred all things to the supreme Artisan and recognized, loved, and praised their Maker in all things. It came to pass, by a heavenly gift of kindness, that he possessed all things in God and God in all things. In consideration of the primal origin of all things, he would call all creatures, however insignificant, by the names of brother and sister since they come forth with him from the one source. He embraced those, however, more tenderly and passionately who portray by a natural likeness the gracious gentleness of Christ and exemplify it in the Scriptures. I came to pass by a supernatural influx of power that the nature of brute animals was moved in some gracious manner toward him. Even inanimate things obeyed his command, as if this same holy man, *so simple and upright*, had already returned to the state of *innocence*.

Scripture reflection: Hosea 14:1-9

Return, O Israel, to the LORD your God,
for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.

Take with you words

and return to the LORD;

say to him,

"Take away all iniquity;
accept that which is good
and we will render
the fruit of our lips.

Assyria shall not save us,
we will not ride upon horses;
and we will say no more, 'Our God,'
to the work of our hands.

In you the orphan finds mercy."

I will heal their faithlessness;
I will love them freely,
for my anger has turned from them.
I will be as the dew to Israel;

he shall blossom as the lily,
he shall strike root as the poplar;
his shoots shall spread out;
his beauty shall be like the olive,
and his fragrance like Lebanon.

They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow,
they shall flourish as a garden;
they shall blossom as the vine,
their fragrance shall be like the wine of Lebanon.

O Ephraim, what have I to do with idols?

It is I who answer and look after you.

I am like an evergreen cypress,
from me comes your fruit.

Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
whoever is discerning, let him know them;
for the ways of the LORD are right,
and the upright walk in them,
but transgressors stumble in them.