

Bringing out of our storehouse the flesh and blood of our tradition in such a way as to feed future generations . . .

The Prophetic Heart (1994) — Joseph P. Chinnici OFM



The TAU

From the time of Ezekiel the sign of the **TAU**, marked on the forehead of those turning to God in faith and repentance has long represented faithfulness and wholehearted love. It was used for healing and victory.

Pope Innocent III, evoked the sign of the **TAU from Ezekiel** when opening the Fourth Lateran Council in 1216 calling for the renewal of the Church, “*Mercy will be granted to those to bear the TAU, a mark of a life of penance and renewal in Christ.*”

And so Francis, who was present at the Council, wanted to sign himself with the **TAU**, and his brothers along with him. The **TAU** became the sign of the little Band’s mission: the preaching of faith and repentance (Rule of 1221:23).

Thomas of Celano, writing in 1252, notes, “The **TAU** symbol had, above all others, his preference. Francis used it as a signature for his letters, and he painted a drawing of it on the walls of all the cells.” One of these paintings, believed to be created by Francis, is found in the little chapel of Mary Magdalen at Fonte Columbo in the Rieti Valley where Francis wrote his Rule.

Another very precious document, housed in the Basilica of St. Francis, is Francis’ own handwritten blessing for Brother Leo — signed with the **TAU**.

Above all else, the TAU meant mission for Francis: a mission to proclaim the Goodness of God by a wholehearted following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ because of whom all life is sacred.



Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis

ORIGINAL COMMENTARY

Margaret Carney OSF and Thaddeus Horgan SA

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We possess the prophetic message as something altogether reliable. Keep your attention closely fixed on it, as you would on a lamp shining in a dark place until the first streaks of dawn appear and the Morning Star rises in your hearts.

2 Peter 1:19

TITLE

Found in the earliest biographies of St. Francis, the Third Order comprised married or single lay women and men who desired to follow the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi without professing the vows of religious life. Gradually, some within the Third Order began to withdraw and form religious communities. Thus the evolution of the Third Order Regular — i.e. women or men living in community governed by canonical rule. These groups were loosely structured at first until canonically approved in the 15th century.

While all three “Orders” comprise one Franciscan Family, St. Francis’ inclusive vision led him to establish three distinct patterns of Gospel life, three different styles of Gospel living, three different emphases given to fundamental Gospel values in regard to spirituality and mission. With the establishing of a Third Order, every person of good will was now assured an opportunity to articulate the saving word of the Gospel spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi.



Most High
glorious God
enlighten the darkness of my heart.
and give me
true faith
certain hope,
and perfect charity,
sense and knowledge
Lord,
that I may carry out
Your holy and true command.

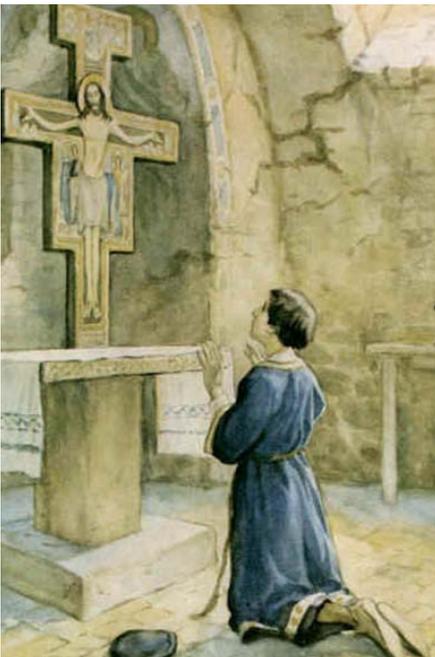
WORDS OF ST. FRANCIS TO HIS FOLLOWERS



The idea of a Third Order was not original to St. Francis. Pre-dating St. Francis by six hundred years, men and women for centuries had committed themselves to a life of continual conversion to Gospel ideals by public and private acts of prayer and penance. This penitential movement attracted a variety of persons from all walks of life including St. Francis himself. It is no surprise then that his first followers identified themselves as “penitents of Assisi.”

Francis, however, carried his Gospel project a step further. Ever faithful to the Church, in 1209 Francis and the early brothers traveled to Rome to receive Papal approval for the Rule he had written. With that approval, while no longer considered penitents themselves, Francis and his brothers continued to minister to and influence the penitents of their day who came seeking spiritual direction. This became the foundation of the third form of Franciscan Gospel life, the Third Order.

This is attested to in citations from several sources including Francis’ own writings, the earliest authenticated (c.1215) being the *First Version of the Letter to the Faithful* now known as the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*. This Exhortation has been placed as the prologue for both the Third Order Secular and Third Order Regular Rules, thus expressing our common origins. Many of our particular founders and foundresses can rightly be called latter-day penitents.



CHAPTER I: Our Identity Most High, glorious God

Our *Rule and Life (Forma Vitae)* is a spiritual document containing values, attitudes, and principles necessary for a way of life. As such, it is a clear, brief, and fundamental statement of the attitudes and beliefs communicated by Francis to his followers about our way of living “according to the Gospel.”

Contextualized in the Church’s criteria for Religious who profess the Church’s canonical vows found in the Vatican Council II documents *Lumen Gentium* 45 and *Perfectae Caritatis* 2, the text is formed around four values: penance (biblical *metanoia*), contemplative prayer, poverty, and minority (humility). Other qualities

associated with our Order such as simplicity, joy, works of mercy and the pursuit of peace through justice all reflect these basic four values. Holding all these values together is relationship in community, that place where we best live out the Gospel values we profess.

The text is largely in the words of St. Francis and follows the sequence of ideas found in the *Rule of 1221 (The Earlier Rule)* and the first part of Francis’ *Testament*. A legacy from the ancient “penitents of Assisi”, the specific charism of our Third Order is continuous conversion of heart.

ARTICLE 1

As members of the Third Order Regular, our lives are centered in “observing the Holy Gospel.” We profess the Church’s canonical vows and follow St. Francis’ *third form* of Gospel living.

ARTICLE 2

This article is the *charism statement* of the Third Order Regular. *Conversion of Heart (Biblical Penance)* is central to our Order’s spirituality. It is the root value of our tradition manifesting itself in *poverty, minority, and contemplation*. Conversion of Heart has three basic elements: 1) to acknowledge God, 2) to adore God, 3) to serve God.

To acknowledge God is an expression of *persevering in true faith*. We acknowledge God in creation, in the word of Scripture, in the manifest goodness of God, and especially in the words, life, deeds, and teachings of Jesus. To adore God is a commitment to live one’s whole life in a prayerful and childlike way, with purity of heart and in poverty and loving obedience. To serve God implies not only charity to one’s neighbor but also “action on behalf of justice” in the promotion of peace.

ARTICLE 3

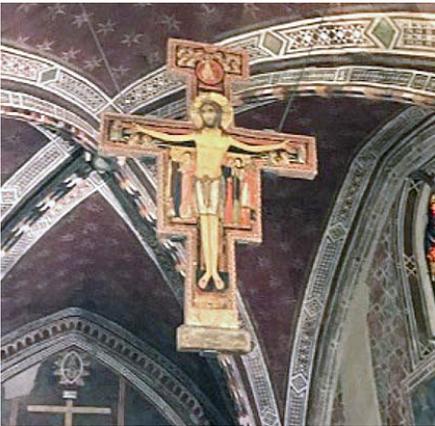
For St. Francis “living in true faith and in penance” (*Earlier Rule, Chapter XXIII: 7*) implies fidelity to the Church as guardian and teacher of the truth of Revelation. This fidelity is to the leaders of the Church (Pope and Bishops) as well as to the leaders of our own congregations or fraternities. We are to live as witnesses to the Gospel by announcing penance and peace to all

and by fostering deep unity within the universal Church and with all branches of our vast Franciscan family. This is essential if one is to live a Gospel life.

The “place” where our life in fidelity, penance, and obedience is primarily expressed is within our own fraternity/congregation where we reverence one another and actively promote harmony.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER I

The importance of considering the text of our Rule and Life as a spiritual document rather than a legal or minimalistic rule is clear when one considers Francis’ notion of obedience. We are to be received “into obedience,” live “in obedience,” and guard against “wandering outside of obedience.” According to Francis’ new vision of religious life, we do not enter a monastery; rather, we are “received into the common bond of obedience” to shared beliefs and inspiration by all the members. This “mutual obedience” is to faith, to Christ, to the Gospel, to the Church, to the minister, to one another. It is never arbitrary, but mediated through the Church, the Rule, and our Constitutions.



CHAPTER 11: Acceptance Into This Life Enlighten the darkness of my heart

ARTICLE 4

Formation is presented as an integrated process encompassing initial formation when one is first accepted to ongoing formation throughout the whole of life. The four fundamental values (conversion

of heart, prayer, poverty, and minority) which constitute the fabric of the Rule text, are a thread weaving through this and the succeeding chapters. For Francis and Clare, conversion of heart is the result of God’s inspiration. Therefore, the candidate, inspired by the Holy Spirit, enters into a “relationship of obedience” by living the Gospel literally through poverty, humble service, and prayerfulness.

ARTICLE 5

Reflecting on his own initial conversion experience, Francis situates *discernment* as a core component of formation. Carried out through *dialogue* between the individual and representatives of the community, this *discernment* assures one is convinced that his or her call is from God. The candidate is to be initiated into the life of the community/fraternity, which in itself is formative and the “place” of ongoing conversion. Furthermore, the Gospel is to be explained and presented as the only “textbook” required. It alone, as Francis and Clare experienced, will help the candidate understand the importance of divesting self of all that could hinder total conversion in the journey to follow in the footprints of Christ.

ARTICLE 6

Continuous conversion of heart is put in focus as a life-long stance from novitiate through final profession to death. Led by God and in imitation of Christ’s life, it is our ongoing intentional consecration to Gospel life. This life of *penance* (*Biblical metanoia*) is always begun anew and always manifest concretely by simplicity of dress and lifestyle and by radical self-giving to those who are poor.

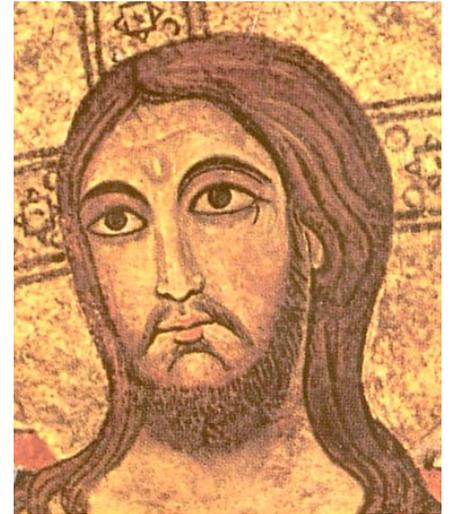
ARTICLE 7

The implications of beginning a life of penance and being “received into obedience” are many. Instead of commitment to stability of place, one is now bound to a familial relationship with others equally committed to total conversion and the observance of the holy Gospel. In this “place” of *mutual* obedience and *mutual* responsibility, the minister is the link whom all are to obey and who encourages all “to do all they

have promised the Lord to observe.” The Third Order fundamental values of poverty and minority are developed more deeply in this atmosphere of ongoing observance of the Rule and Life. Likewise, directed by obedience and freed of attachment by poverty, one is propelled to live the canonical vows more deeply in chastity “with a single heart and a pure mind.”

ARTICLE 8

The turning to God is to be so complete that nothing less than union with God in Christ through the Spirit is to be one’s life’s objective. This union with God in love is to spill over into love for neighbor through works of mercy, the “*fruits befitting repentance.*”



CHAPTER THREE The Spirit of Prayer

Give me true FAITH

Following the exhortation to make ourselves a dwelling place for the Trinity, this chapter summarizes key elements of prayer in the Franciscan tradition. Franciscan prayer is to be Trinitarian and Incarnational. Neither Clare nor Francis offered a complicated prayer method to achieve this. Rather, their prayer was contemplative — to be present to God who is present to all creatures in prayer. The purpose of Franciscan Prayer then is to give God ceaseless praise and thanksgiving for all God has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Christ.

ARTICLE 9

Prayer is a way of life for us — all the time and everywhere. The fruits of this prayer are adoration, joy, thanksgiving, and desire for God. This is the holiness to which we are called. In addition to personal prayer, the communal prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours sanctifies every hour of the day and makes intercession for the Church, Christ's Mystical Body, and for the world. Celebrating God's gift of salvation, we pray the Hours as a sign of fidelity to the Church's tradition of daily praise and intercession. While all of us are called to contemplative prayer, we are strengthened and enriched by some who embrace the life of intercession and adoration in an exclusive way.

ARTICLE 10

The motivation for our life of ceaseless prayer is Francis' love for creation and his insight into its meaning. We praise God "with" all creatures, the created world being the expression of God's goodness and the theater of God's redemptive love for us. Because we are made in God's image, it is possible for us to seek union with God as we do God's will. Thus, the Franciscan does not flee the world in order to "escape" to God, but seeks immersion in its sacramental reality.

ARTICLE 11

Francis was given over to "persistent meditation" and "penetrating consideration" of the Scriptures. Like Francis, we seek "spirit and life" in the words of the Gospel.

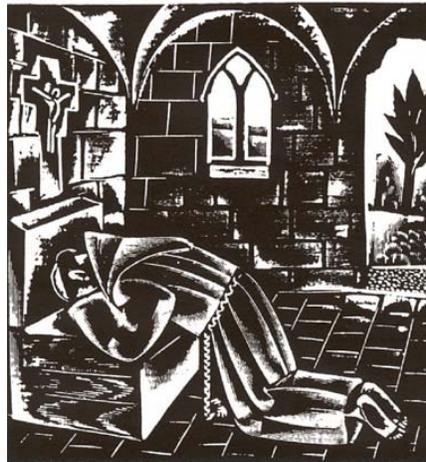
ARTICLE 12

Just as Francis and the brothers played a crucial role in helping to reform Eucharistic theology and devotion after the Fourth Lateran Council so too, in our day, Vatican Council II has provided a renewed meaning of the Eucharist highlighting "participation" as an essential characteristic of our celebration. In both reforms, "humility and reverence" are the desired dispositions for receiving the Eucharist. In addition, reverence for the holy name of Jesus and respect for the sacred

character of the words of the Gospels are signs of conversion and our readiness to put God's word into effect.

ARTICLE 13

Contrition is the second meaning of *penance* found in Francis' writings. This article portrays the reality of human weakness and our need for help in making our way to God. Our *repentance* is to be both interior and exterior and marked by *authenticity*. One of the fruits of true repentance is *fasting* which can be literal or symbolic. Literally our hunger can assist us in feeling the need for God; figuratively, fasting can free us from whatever clutters up our lives. Both types of fasting underpin the virtues of simplicity and minority. Thus, the height of true contemplation in the Franciscan tradition is transformation into Jesus Christ "who chose to be crucified because of the excess of his love" for us



CHAPTER IV: The Life of Chastity for the Sake of The Kingdom

Certain HOPE . . .

ARTICLE 14

The call to a life of chastity is described as a preferential love for Christ, *in* whom, *through* whom, and *for* whom all things were created. Formed in the image and likeness of God, the potential for human development is heightened when one's whole life is gathered into this consecration of the

person's innermost self to God. Chastity then is situated in the immense awe Francis experienced as he contemplated the great dignity given us by God.

ARTICLE 15

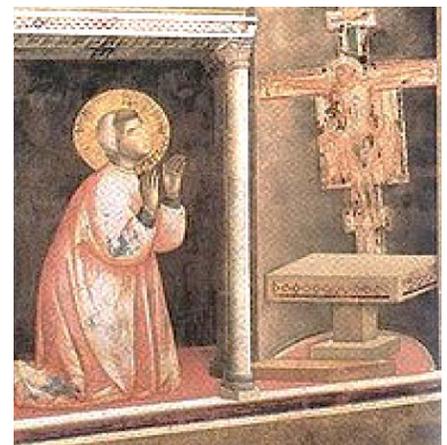
For Francis, *chastity* is intimately related to *poverty* that frees us by protecting the growth of the Word within our lives from the choking thorns and rocks of temporal care. Chastity is not for ourselves alone; rather, it empowers us to witness to God's primacy in practical, visible ways, especially in charity toward our neighbor.

ARTICLE 16

In his *Letters to the Faithful*, Francis compares the love of the disciple to the love of a spouse. This *spousal imagery* has an honored tradition in Scripture, in the Church, and in the writings of saints and mystics. It speaks to deep personal union with God.

ARTICLE 17

Mary is *par excellence*, the *Spouse of the Holy Spirit*, the *Mother of the Church*, and, as Francis calls her, the *Virgin Made Church*. Her *Magnificat* summarizes all of the longing and hopes of those who are poor and disregarded and who depend solely upon God's power to save.



CHAPTER V: The Way to Serve and Work Perfect charity

Francis wanted his friars to be servants of the Word rather than set apart as a clerical class or hierarchical monastic

community. He desired that his sisters and brothers be like the poor and humble Christ, submissive to all as *minores* in contrast to the wealthy and powerful *majores* of his day.

These characteristics were due to three historic reasons: 1) the gradual clericalization of the Order, 2) Francis' own inspiration based on Gospel reflection, and 3) the socio-political situation of Assisi in his day.

As brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular we find meaning in *minority* as a fundamental value since works of mercy are intrinsic to our life of penance (ongoing conversion). Our turning to God is only as authentic as our love for our neighbor especially those among us who are considered least, marginal, and who have no voice. Minority implies conforming oneself, through a life of penance, to Christ. It recognizes the world as the *place* of our redemption, the "holy ground" where we live out our call to conversion of heart through childlikeness (minority), that quality named by Jesus as an *absolute* requirement for life in the Reign of God.

Reception "into obedience" for Francis brings us into a form of life which is at once *in the world* and yet stands counter-culturally *against the world*. This is why Francis is concerned that we commit ourselves to actual identity with the *minores*, those who are poor and powerless. The constant tradition of our Order and the continuing current teaching of the Church call us to this stance.

ARTICLE 18 and ARTICLE 19

In view of the contemporary tendency to "workaholicism" and the "heresy of good works" (feverish activity taking the place of God), Francis offers a balanced view of the relationship between prayer and work. As all those who are poor must, we work and serve as God gives the talent, but we do not work ourselves to death. Rather, there is a legitimate form of *idleness* which allows for leisure and contemplation.

Work identifies us as *minores*. It gives good example and provides sustenance for each other, our ministries, and ourselves. We give

away what is beyond our needs never working to accumulate wealth. We never seek to be "over" others by domination or manipulation. In this, we are called to "put on the mind of Christ" in a spirit of servanthood.

ARTICLE 20

When we enter into association with other persons for any reason, we seek to exhibit the qualities proclaimed by Christ in the Beatitudes. Others will be touched by our witness to joyfulness in God. This non-judgmental attitude alone will make our peaceable greeting credible



CHAPTER VI: The Life of Poverty Sense and knowledge

To turn to God continuously means to "put on Christ", to walk in Christ's footprints. For Clare and Francis this Good News could only be made flesh by choosing poverty and life among those who are poor. Evangelical poverty has both personal and social dimensions. As an attitude of heart, poverty is the

admission of our own powerlessness to save ourselves. It is freeing ourselves to be totally dependent on God's Divine Providence manifest most poignantly in Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God made flesh. But Evangelical Poverty equally means actual poverty, a condition that best preserves us in the state of total dependence on God. Material poverty is the sign of our uncluttered and converted selves. It further associates us with those who are poor to whom the Good News is proclaimed.

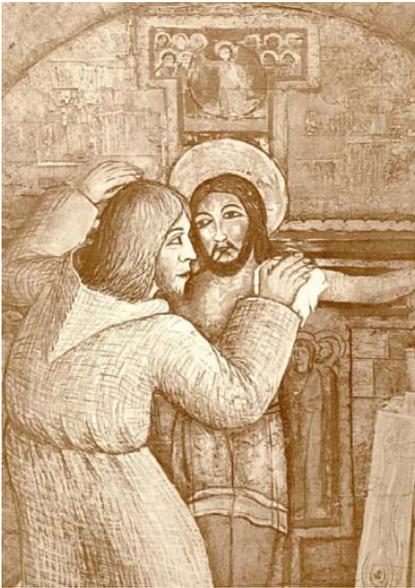
ARTICLE 21

Francis does not *define* poverty; rather, he gives us the *reason* why poverty is so central to our way of life. He simply and clearly points to Christ. It is because Jesus chose to live in humility (minority) and emptied himself becoming poor for our salvation, that we who desire to follow in his footprints must do the same. Mary too participated in her son's saving activity by choosing poverty in this world. This is the core of Franciscan Marian devotion. This self-emptying process implies total dependence on God's Providence and is expressed in the Third Order Regular tradition by "deeds befitting our conversion" — i.e. works of mercy.

Francis adds a warning about the destructive force of greed, acquisition, and competition that use of money can bring.

ARTICLE 22

As members of the third form of Franciscan Gospel life, we retain the right to own goods. Therefore, our response to the ideal of poverty is realized more by fostering freedom from attachment and possessive instincts that cause us to live and act like the wealthy. In fact, in the context of Francis' and Clare's radical response to the Gospel call to detachment, the highest form of poverty for us is to be non-judgmental in imitation of Christ who did not judge us, but rather redeemed us. Divine Providence, in this light, not only provides and protects, but more essentially, saves.



CHAPTER VII: Love of Brothers and Sisters That I may carry out

The significance of the word *fraternity* in the vocabulary of Clare and Francis is found in their insights that Jesus became brother to all of us in the Incarnation. *Fraternity* indicates a *relational commitment* rooted in our relationship to this elder Brother of ours. We are not bound to a place (e.g. monastery) but are “received into the obedience” of relationship with our sisters and brothers in Christ. Our conversion, prayer, poverty, and minority are enfolded in the fraternity/community where we experience God giving us the power to love one another.

Notwithstanding the essential import of this term, the English speaking world has struggled to find an appropriate translation of *fraternity* for those who believe a more inclusive language is crucial. There being no clear consensus, though admitting its inadequacy, the present commentary has substituted the word *community*.

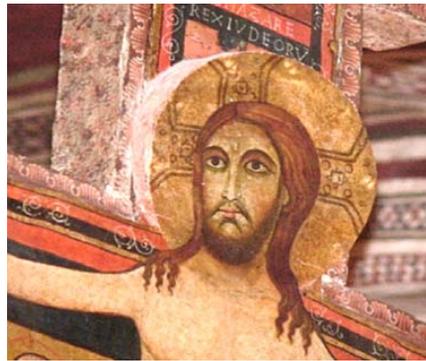
ARTICLE 23

The basis of our lives together is God who is *Love*, incarnate in Jesus Christ. Following the example of Jesus and in the spirit of Francis and Clare, we want to love our brothers and sisters by concrete deeds. Our literal living of the Gospel urges us toward being *servant to all* in mutual *trust* and *interdependence*.

When relationships are weakened, our Gospel living insists on reparation and *reconciliation* as we share responsibility for life together. We are to be messengers of *peace* avoiding pride, competitiveness and self-righteousness.

ARTICLE 24

We originate in a single impulse of *Divine Love*. We are bound to one another in *mutual obedience* which calls for *forgiveness* without accusation.



CHAPTER VIII: The Obedience of Love Your holy

It is in the unfolding of *Gospel obedience* in fraternity/community (relationship) that the vowed commitment takes its ecclesial vitality. Francis and Clare embraced the mystery of the obedience of Christ as it is portrayed in the Gospel of John. In their reflection, they came to grasp the essential nature of obedience as the underlying attitude necessary for any genuine conversion. The framework for such obedience is the brotherhood/sisterhood, that “place” where we live out the Gospel call to poverty, minority, contemplation, and conversion. Franciscan life then is characterized as much by obedience as it is by poverty. Its motive is God’s love made visible in the Word Made Flesh.

ARTICLE 25

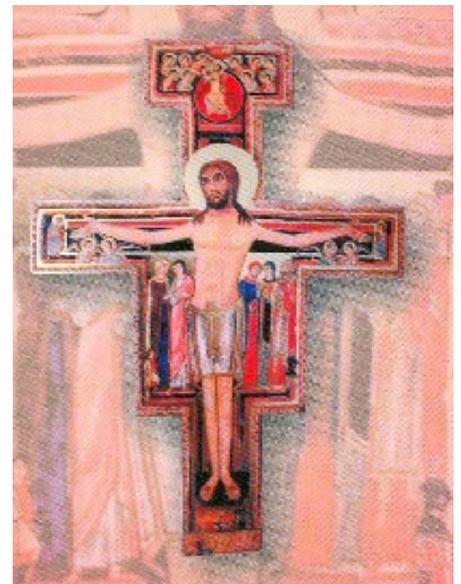
Franciscan obedience is *self-emptying* and therefore intrinsically related to poverty. It is *mutual*, intended for both ministers and members alike. It involves *witness and ministry* for the sake of true justice. We are called to be credible *signs of salvation* as well as instruments of

God’s *reconciliation*. In our Franciscan tradition, the Chapter, whether general, regional, or local is the first vehicle for rendering obedience. It is an explicit structure intended to enable us to renew repeatedly our desire to better observe the Rule and Life we have promised. In imitation of Jesus, neither domination nor manipulation hold a place in our lives. Rather our lives are to be characterized by mutual service in love.

ARTICLE 26 and ARTICLE 27

Our *mutual obedience* is guided by the Rule and by our conscience. The minister, while having *authority* with reference to what all have promised the Lord, is not to exercise this authority as the powerful of the world do. Their service to all is to be offered with humility, love, and kindness.

The relationship of *poverty to obedience* is situated in the unmistakable call to *continuous conversion*. In that spirit, no one is to appropriate or possess any office, ministry, assignment or service.



CHAPTER IX: Apostolic Life

And true command

ARTICLE 28

Francis understood the activity of service as an extension of prayer thus signifying the link between *contemplation* and *action*. While the poverty and obedience

of Jesus invite us to single-hearted consecration to His love, the life thus fashioned will, of necessity, flow outward to others. We are called to go into the world to give witness, first *by our lives* and then *by our work*. In both, *continuous conversion of heart* is seen as the cornerstone of our Franciscan evangelical spirituality.

ARTICLE 29

Jesus affirmed The Great Commandment (The Shema) as the cornerstone of human response to God's revelation of covenanted love. "*Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is Lord alone! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*"

Francis, "no deaf hearer of the Gospel," (1C9:22) seized upon this insistence and made this passage the opening of his directives to the first members of our Order (*The First Letter to the Faithful*). Desiring to inculcate a missionary spirit in his followers, Francis urges them to convince the

world of God's goodness by example and words, taking heed, being obedient, and responding wholeheartedly to God's commandment of love.

ARTICLE 30

The origin of our tradition of congregational apostolic works is rooted in those who were living in *penitential communities* in Francis' time who translated the call to be *peacemakers* by serving others through spiritual and corporal works of mercy. This service extended particularly to social outcasts or those whose needs were not met by existing social and ecclesiastical structures. Just as important as the works themselves, this outreach must always be done in a spirit of reconciliation and evangelization. Of significant impact on the Church of his time was Francis' inclusion of the manner in which missionary preaching was to be done. The approach was to be marked by humility, a submissive spirit, mutual discernment, peaceful conduct, timely announcing of the Word, and confidence in the love of Christ even in

the face of death. The transformation of the world is a fundamental element of our preaching of the Gospel. As Francis responded to the call of Lateran Council IV, we respond to the ecclesial energy of our Church today in the call of Vatican Council II and other pronouncements and plans of our contemporary Church.

TE EXHORTATION AND BLESSING

The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis ends as it began in *evangelical conversion of heart in a spirit of prayer, poverty, humility, and obedience*. The death of Francis was not the death of his inspiration now kept alive in us and in the Church by the operation of the Holy Spirit. Francis' blessing from *The Testament* links us to the *Rule of 1927* and to past Rules of our Order upon which this new Rule is built and preserved anew.

Peace and All Good!



Whoever will observe these things
Shall be filled with the blessings of
the Most High Father in heaven
and on earth with the blessing of
His beloved Son, with the Holy Spirit,
and with all the virtues and with all the saints.
And I, Brother Francis, your little one
and servant, in as far as I am able,
confirm to you within and without,
this most Holy Blessing.

Testament 40-41, TOR Rule 9:32

AUTHORS:

Thaddeus Horgan, Atonement Friar, Graymoor, NY, was one of the seven member “Work Group” on the TOR Rule, representing the USA with Margaret Carney OSF. Thaddeus, theologian and Franciscan scholar, ministered in Jamaica, Washington, D.C., Graymoor, NY and Rome, Italy. His *Turned to the Lord* publication for the Franciscan Federation USA, 1987 was Thaddeus’ signature piece faithfully recognizing the total and continuous giving of self; reconciliation as the imperative of Franciscan life, and response to the Love of God in Jesus as the uncomplicated substance of Franciscan spirituality. Thaddeus died at age 54 in 1990.

Margaret Carney, Sister of *St. Francis of the Neumann Communities*, NY, with unmatched commitment has untiringly traveled, taught, written, administered and lived the retrieved message of the Rule and Life of the **Third Order Regular**. She is the first woman to achieve a Doctorate in *Franciscan Studies* from the Antonianum, Rome, Italy. One of the seven global co-authors of the 1982 TOR Rule, Margaret’s service to the Franciscan family includes President of St. Bonaventure University, NY, Director of the Franciscan Institute, Council Member of the IFC-TOR, Rome and international lecturer in 7 countries.

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This synthesis was prepared by Anne Amati, OSF, a Sister of *St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, who ministered many years as an educator on various levels. A pivotal moment in her Franciscan life was the invitation in 1989 to join the staff of the Franciscan Pilgrimage Programs. This experience became an integral component in her formation in the Franciscan charism leading her into ministry as an itinerant retreat director, facilitator, and theological reflector for Franciscan congregations. After six years as a council member in the congregational leadership of her community, Anne has returned to retreat ministry.

Reflection on Writing the Rule by Margaret Carney OSF

As the Commentary contained in these pages is being written, our small blue planet spins breathlessly towards the end of a century. On December 8, 1982, Pope John Paul II confirmed the newly revised *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis*.

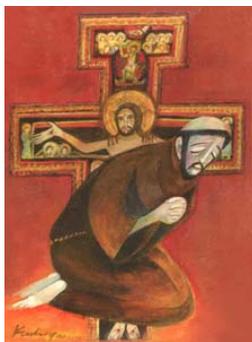
Brothers and sisters from some thirty countries participated in the writing of the Rule. Nearly two hundred superiors general were *personally* present at the final assembly in March, 1981. *Never before in the Order’s history have the members exercised such collective responsibility and global communication.* The success of the efforts borders on the truly miraculous!

We have fulfilled the mandate to cooperate in the work of revising our Rule on behalf of *twenty thousand* Third Order Regular Franciscans in the United States. This Rule has emerged as a sacred exchange of desires, commitments, and prophetic convictions. Our Amen! to this Rule binds us together for a new stage of the pilgrimage of penance and peacemaking in our time.

Today my world includes Franciscans from every part of the world... This is a sign and symbol of the possibility of becoming a family whose boundaries become more and more inclusive with each generation. This power to expand, and in that expansion, to touch across continents is a new fact of Franciscan existence for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. *I believe that the courage to dream of a new Rule began that expansion.*

Margaret Carney OSF, *Commentary Introduction*, September 14, 1983. Franciscan Federation TOR/USA, and “A Decade of Development.” *The CORD*, September. 1992.

A closing remembrance from Roland Faley TOR Minister General of the TOR’s during the Rule Project.



The Spirit was in the atmosphere. Attitudes changed; friendships were made; logic held sway . . . On the final working day, the Rule was approved article by article, chapter by chapter. The consensus of some two hundred participants was practically unanimous.

I remember going home that final night, knowing that we had made history. There was a lightness to my step and a “Te Deum” in my heart. Never before or since in my lifetime have I so concretely experienced the truth of the psalm, “Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

“Genesis ... The 1982 Rule — a Personal Remembrance”
The CORD September 1992, Volume 42, No. 9, page 228

This TAU Series . . . TOR #10 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org
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