

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



## KNOW, ADORE, SERVE: The Path to Conversion

This theme surfaces in the following two pieces:

1. The Franciscan Federation presentation of **Thaddeus Horgan SA** and
2. the presentation given at the Rome Assembly by **Margaret Carney OSF**, where 200 Superiors Generals voted to approve the new Rule. Both presenters reflect on the life of St. Francis and the experiences that led to his conversion and ultimate union with Christ.

As Franciscans, our challenge is to do likewise by following our own conversion path to an intimate relationship with God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. Our TOR Rule of Life will support us on *our* quest to *know*, to *adore*, and to *serve* the Lord.

This synthesis juxtaposes each presenter’s invaluable insights and nuances.



**Margaret Carney OSF** suggests, that in order to understand the fundamental value of CONVERSION within our Franciscan life, we reflect on conversion in the life of St. Francis. In his testament, we find three elements:

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| First,  | <b>THE INITIATIVE OF GOD</b><br>“The Lord led me . . .”   |
| Second, | <b>A CHANGE OF OUTWARD BEHAVIOR</b><br>“It seemed exceedingly bitter to me to see lepers . . .”                           |
| Third,  | <b>AN INTERIOR TRANSFORMATION</b><br>“That which had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness”<br>Testament 1 and 2 |

Francis continually asked: “**WHO ARE YOU, MY GOD, AND WHO AM I?**”

*To keep asking the question . . . To keep accepting the answers that come at every moment of our existence, is to know the meaning of a life of penance, OF CONTINUAL CONVERSION.*

How will our new Rule assist us in our life of continual conversion?



### 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.*



# The Third Order Regular Rule And FRANCISCAN Spirituality

As the height of intense interest and study on the TOR Rule, **Sister Ann Carville OSF**, as Executive Director of the *Franciscan Federation*, began a series of *PROPOSITO'S* for the NEWSLETTER of the *Franciscan Federation*. This one by **Thaddeus Horgan SA**, co-author of the new Rule, was the very first one. As a member of the Work Group of seven international Franciscans, Thaddeus' zeal for presenting the Rule's values touched thousands of Franciscans worldwide. His untimely death, April 19, 1990, left both an ache and a legacy in the telling of the Rule's story. It is a privilege to present this special contribution to that story from 1982.

## THADDEUS HORGAN, S.A.

"Now that we have a new Rule, will that change our Franciscan spirituality?" The answer is "no." The Rule Text clarifies just what our spirituality is in this post-Vatican II era. It is written in Francis' own words, a definite mark that our spirituality is a way to God. That way is distinctive . . . Franciscan spirituality is the life-process of applying to ourselves Francis' way of encountering and experiencing God. For Francis, God is known eminently in Christ, the Christ of the gospel who announces repentance and peace for all. To know God is a gift of the Spirit (hence "spirituality").

Because of our call by the Spirit to be Franciscan, Francis' life, example and experience are most important. Francis went to such great pains in the **Testament** to tell us of them (Test. 1-23). Like Francis we are to embrace charism, God's gift of insight into the mystery of salvation and God's grace, and respond to it in a threefold way:

1. personally,
2. according to the spirit of our particular congregation, and
3. in our current circumstances.

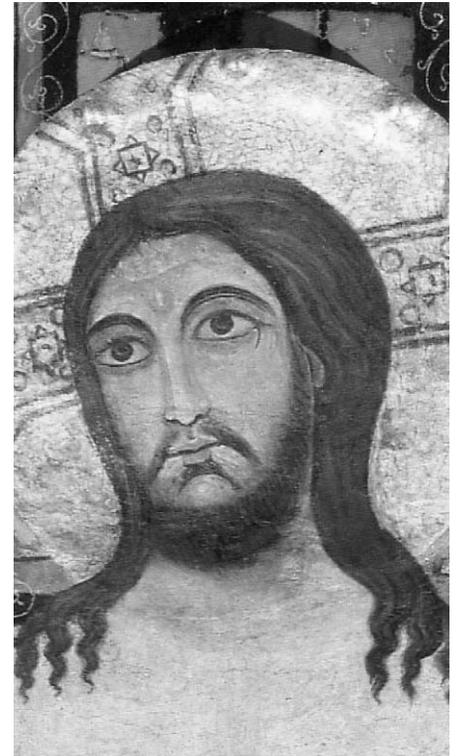
*"To know God,  
to adore God,  
to serve God in true  
conversion of heart."*

For us in the Penitential or Third Order Tradition this particularly means responding to the Lord's call to be turned totally and continuously to the Lord and to neighbor by following in Christ's footprints as Francis did **but** to do so in our way, today.

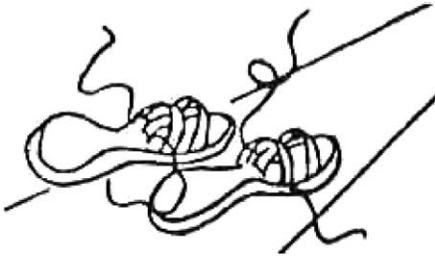
The Prologue focuses on the charism of **conversion** or **metanoia**. *Article two* of the TOR Rule explicitly spells out the practical meaning of continuous conversion which is the very center of the gospel message. This is done in the words of Francis (RNB 23:4). Three expressions summarize the whole Rule as well as our Franciscan spirituality. Therefore, using Francis' three expressions about our charism — let us begin to reflect and apply our spirituality as the Rule projects.

Francis' three expressions are:

1. ". . . *eum cognoverunt* . . . to know
2. *et adoraverunt et . . . to adore*
3. *ei servierunt in poenitentia*" . . . to serve God in true conversion of heart."



**TO KNOW GOD** for Francis is to be open to true faith and to our loving compassionate God (RNB 23:7; II Ep. Fid 63-71) who loves the world so much that He sent his only Son. And they sent their Spirit to make us perfectly one in God and with one another. (cf RNB 23:1-7) Being one with God is only possible in Christ (Ep. Fid 11:48-53) so we must put on Christ by assimilating the values and attitudes (Phil. 2:5) of the Lord. We penitential Franciscans "Turn to God and believe the good news." (Mk. 1:15) Like Francis, we make ourselves experience Christ and who Christ was because of his values and attitudes. Christ experienced our humanity totally through the Incarnation. For Francis we do this, as the Lord did, by adoring God and serving our neighbor.



## I. COGNOVERUNT — knowing the Lord.

In her reflection,

 **Margaret Carney** offers a first step in knowing God on the journey of conversion, “We cannot know the Lord without knowing as well our sinfulness.

*This is the first step in the  
JOURNEY  
OF CONVERSION.*

Francis speaks of the darkness and blindness of sin (2 EpFid 63-71). “All those who refuse to taste and see how good the Lord is and who love the darkness rather than the light are under a curse.” Again in 37-41 he warns of the mistrust we must have of our own sinful tendencies and place ourselves under “the yoke of obedience” in order to break with sin. So, too, the prophets called Israel to renounce sinfulness and return to the Lord.

(Ex. 18, 23; Jer. 1.16; Os. 3,5).

This break with sin is not our work, it is God’s work in us. Francis insists that it was the Lord alone who led and inspired him, just as Paul would remind his hearers in the *Letter to the Romans* “it is not a question of our willing or doing but of God’s mercy” (Rom. 9,16). Francis echoes this thought when he reminds us that we must give thanks to God because “the Lord God . . . through his mercy alone saved us; who did and does every good thing for us, miserable . . . though we are” (RegNB 23,8).

Since it is through the passion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus that this grace is made possible for us, we must grant Jesus dominion over our lives to be fully turned towards God. **Francis** reminds us that the Lord alone is the way to the Father (Adm. I, I: Jn. 13, 6-9). In her *Testament*, **Clare** reminded her sisters that the “Son of God made Himself our way” and Francis taught that way by word and example. This way is not simply a way of commandments, but a way of union, of relationship. It is a way that leads to the most profound surrender to the Lord (2 EpFid 40-54). We are to be the brides of the Lord when our soul is united to Him by the Holy Spirit.

### FRANCIS

*insists that our conversion from sin to obedience and to love will lead us to that union which the prophets described in nuptial terms, the espousal of Yahweh with Yahweh’s people, Israel.*



**B) TO ADORE GOD** is more than a form of prayer for Franciscans. Following Christ’s example, adoration for Francis was the total investment of self, the total handing over of self to

God, and the total commitment of self to God’s purposes. Francis recognized that God’s greatest glory is the obedience of Christ (Ph. 2:5-12). God’s will is humanity’s salvation. For this Christ emptied himself and became obedient. To do what is salvific, then, is God’s greatest glory. In his humanity and through human experience, Jesus taught us how to be turned genuinely to God. This is discipleship: listening and learning from the Lord . . . to be present to God and to be filled with God’s life. Francis’ scriptural reflections taught him that to adore the Lord is a total life-style, the life-style of Jesus characterized by *prayer, poverty, minority and fraternity*.



**1) Prayer is consciously being with God so God can be fully with us in our experience, and with all humanity in theirs.** (Mt. 10:37-42)

Adoration and praise, the substance of prayer for Francis, is our thankful and loving response to the love, the care and the goodness of God for us which are expressed in the paschal mystery now Eucharistically celebrated, in all of salvation history, in creation, and in our relationships with God’s people (II Ep. Fid. 61-62). To live this prayerfulness is

- to “recall Christ’s words through persistent meditation and bring to mind his deeds...” (ICel.84);
- to do all we can to transform our faith in the reality of our unity with the Father in Christ by the Spirit into an experience.
- to join with Christ in the rhythm of the church’s daily intercessory prayer, (The Liturgy of the Hours) and to do these things with purity of heart and a sense of total consecration to God.



**2) Poverty is the commitment to assimilate values revealed by God rather than those of this world**

(Col. 3:1-3).

It requires, as it did of Christ and Francis, that we live as pilgrims here, emptied of worldly value systems, and captured by those proclaimed by the Lord in the beatitudes (Mt. 5:1-10). We live simply (Tim 6:8) having "enough food and sufficient clothing; with these we are content." We are to use well this world's goods to fulfill our needs, the needs of one another and the other poor, especially the helpless (RNB 2:4)



**3) Minority.**

Because **prayer** implies that we realistically accept and gratefully acknowledge God's plan for the world's salvation, and because **poverty** implies our acceptance of God's values for living salvifically and God's will that we use well the gifts in this world,

**Christian life is equated with dependence on God.**

*The attitude necessary for a healthy dependence on God, Francis well knew is **minority**.*

In one sense it is interiorized prayerfulness and lived poverty because it is childlikeness. Biblical littleness is the one thing necessary for entrance into the Kingdom (Mk. 10:15, Lk. 18:17, Mt. 18:13, Jn. 3).

An aspect of Francis' insight into the gospel was to note that the other qualities of gospel life are counsels. **Childlikeness is an absolute** (cf Mt.

19:14 vis-a-vis the rest of that chapter).

The childlike spontaneously come to the Lord (Mt. 11:29, Jn. 6:44); remain

with the Lord (Mk. 8:34) and experience what their destiny in the Lord is.

(Eph. 5:1-2) The adult experience of childlikeness is the joyous awareness that one has been and is the object of the pure love and favor of God. Possessing this littleness is total conversion, the changed mind and heart that is the result of knowing the God who loves us in Christ and sees in us what Christ is to God, Child (Beloved Son).

**Minority** also is seeing in ourselves who Christ is "for us" because we are "in Christ." Jesus is the servant of God showing us how to be gentle, meek, humble, compassionate, peaceable, patient and singlehearted.

**Minority** impels us to love the world, the "place where" of our redemption.

**Minority** also infers going into the world . . . bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming freedom to captives, giving sight to the blind, setting the downtrodden free and announcing the Lord's year of favor (i.e. the self-consciousness of Christ, cf. Lk. 4:17-19).



**4) Fraternity for Franciscans is**

life together, but lived in the consciousness that we are gathered in the Lord's name (Mt. 18:20) Jesus is in our midst as BROTHER/SISTER (II Ep. Fid.56). Our life together is a sign of the Church, Christ's Body, within the Church for the world. Francis' notion of fraternity is identical to Vatican II's expectation that religious life itself should be a sign of Christ's presence among us. (Mt. 28:20). We are called also to live out the gospel with those called to share life with us (Jn. 15:12ff; RNB11, 5). This must happen before we can bring Christ to others. Our life together then is itself a particular and special witness to the Church and a source of efficacious ministry.

It ought to make credible what we proclaim and call people to; namely, to be the Church in the world. The Church is God's believing, praying, worshipping, and serving community in this world preparing the way for the Kingdom. Fidelity to fraternity as well as fidelity to intercessory prayer for the Church and world are the signs of our fidelity to the Church.

Fraternity is or should be an ongoing formation experience. **Metanoia** is ongoing. The presence of Christ among us is ongoing. Our life together then must be the same . . . never ideal, but always concrete, showing how down to earth Franciscan spirituality ought to be.

**II. ADORAVERTUNT — adoring the Lord.**



**Margaret Carney** elaborates on the characteristic of **poverty**, as presented by Horgan, and points out that both Celano and Bonaventure relate that Francis saw that perfect poverty consisted in renunciation of worldly wisdom and he urged his brothers to put aside even the "possession of learning so as to be able to offer themselves naked to the arms of the Crucified (LM VII, 2; II Cel. 194). Francis saw how radical the demands of the Gospel were. Jesus calls for a total gift of self to the Kingdom . . . (Lk. 14, 26-27). It is this radical self-donation and separation from the values of the world that Francis puts so clearly before us in the first chapter of the Rule of 1221.

The adoration of the one who knows the grace of conversion is rooted in a purity of heart and mind that keeps our whole attention centered on the Lord "day and night" (2 EpFid. 19 - 21).

We must not think of this adoration simply as the strength of personal or communal prayer and its fruit. This adoration which reverses the values

of our lives by putting the justice of God before earthly considerations also has the power to regenerate the whole of our lives and of our persons. The gifting of the Spirit in us leads to a powerful reorientation. Paul speaks of this eloquently over and over again.

“Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are not really divine; but now that you have come to know God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more?” (Gal. 4, 8-10), (cf. Rom. 6-33; Col. 2-12; Cor. 6,11).

Horgan’s reflection on Jesus’ and Francis’ life-styles of adoration characterized by prayer, poverty, minority and fraternity are echoed in Carney’s insights as noted above.



**C) TO SERVE GOD** is to live continuously and concretely God’s law of love (1 Jn. 2:3 ff). In our tradition, this has meant doing the works of charity and living fraternal life. In both instances, it requires that we do justice and be instruments of peace, effecting reconciliation with God, with one another and among all God’s people.

The gospel call to free men and women from every form of alienation (Lk. 4:16-22) so all can realize their God-willed destiny to be fully brothers and sisters to Jesus our Brother and to one another is our shared Franciscan service to God. This is seeking first the Kingdom of God and its justice. This is possessing the attitudes and doing the deeds of gospel life concretely (Mt. 5:10) (RNB 16:10-12). The Franciscan attitude toward establishing the justice of the Gospel requires deeds — involvement. Think of Francis’ love of the Cross. Think of the meaning of the Cross on which Jesus embraces all the inhumanity and alienation men and women can muster. Jesus overcame all inhumanity and poured out new life on humanity. Grasping and being this with our entire selves through repentance and lived gospel values . . . is *Franciscan* spirituality. It is integral gospel living.

While we each may not be graced to be and do all our Franciscan penitential calling and charism summons us to, we are, by the fact of vocation, able to be committed totally and constantly to realize within and among ourselves the giftedness God gives us individually and communally. This is the basis of that mutuality and sharing that should characterize our lives. The proposed Rule uses Francis’ words throughout and attempts to present his inspired way to God through Christ in the Spirit faithfully yet briefly, thoroughly but reflectively. This is thoroughly Franciscan for we are renewalists today in an age of renewal. We begin anew, as we should, with ourselves.

### III. SERVIERUNT — serving the Lord.



**Margaret Carney** concurs with Horgan that Francis’ “life-style” was *revolutionary* for his time. *She states: The result of the powerful re-direction of the energies of our*

*lives is seen in our life of service to others.* In both of the *Letters to the Faithful*, Francis links the love of God and neighbor by placing the **Great Commandment** before us (1 EpFid 25-27). The law of love is the yardstick by which we measure the height and depth of our conversion to God. Francis had read and understood well the description of the final judgement in which the Lord rewards the loving acts of those who performed the works of mercy (Mt. 25, 31-46).

This point has a special importance for us as we seek to articulate the tradition and spirituality of our branch of the Franciscan family. Beginning with the exhortations in the *Letters to the penitents*, and down through the centuries, it is clear that the flowering of conversion is found in works done for the good of our neighbors. In our times when it becomes difficult to discern just how to continue — or in what forms to continue — our service to others, it is important to realize that the dichotomy sometimes posed between “being” and “doing” can be false and create an attitude that our works are not essentially related to our lives and prayer. For the members of the Franciscan Third Order this would be a false conclusion.

When writing to the penitents, Francis offers concrete ideas about the forms of good works that they should adopt. They must bring forth the fruits of repentance (Lk. 3,8). Those who have the power to judge are to be merciful; charitable almsgiving is encouraged; authorities are to serve sympathetically (2 EpFid. 25-31).

What Francis proposed to these lay followers of his during his lifetime evolved as we know, into a history of works undertaken in the name of the Church in many cultures, in many ages for the needy of every description.

The ultimate work of mercy, of love, is to lay down one’s life for the sake of the Gospel. Francis proposed this ideal to his friars in his description of



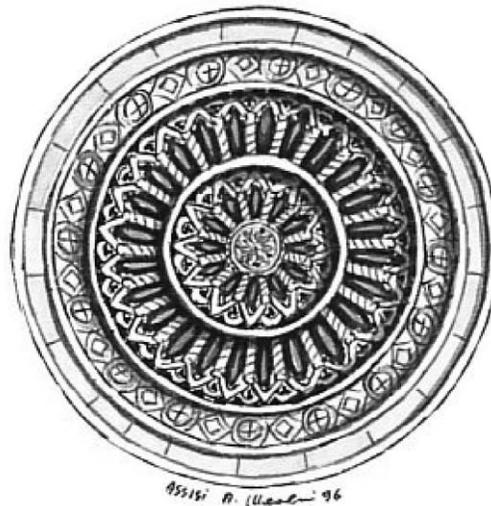
their mission as he envisioned it in the Rule of 1221. Moving from the works that require a generous heart and a discerning eye towards the poor, he calls for a courageous encounter with evil in any form and for a willingness to suffer persecution. (RegNB. 16, 10-12).

Following the call of the Church in our times, we recognize in this text the seed that can grow in our service into

a deep commitment to the poor that is also expressed in work for justice and for the elimination of society's oppression of the poor, the "minors" in our day. Thus the service that flows from a life of continuous conversion is a service seen primarily in terms of love of neighbor expressed in loving actions and work for justice in the world.

While practices aimed at self-discipline have a proper and necessary place in Christian life, they are not the central meaning of the penitential life if it is truly understood. In fact, we find indications in the Scriptures that the Lord Himself rejected such a notion of penance (Mt.11, 18-19). And Francis warned his followers not to make the mistake of believing that external works alone would constitute true religious service. (Adm. 14).

**In Conclusion:** Both **Thaddeus Horgan SA** and **Margaret Carney OSF** have offered their nuanced insights to help us reflect on the life of Francis and the experiences that led to his conversion and union with God. Francis was a kind of revolution for the people of his time. Once Francis accepted God's invitation and recognized his own sinfulness he spent his life *knowing* God, *adoring* God, and *servicing* God in the poor and marginalized of his time with his companions in community (fraternity). Vatican II challenged us to follow more closely in the footprints of our founder, in a manner responsive to the needs of our time. Our TOR Rule of Life serves as a guide. Like Francis let us continue to ask, "*WHO ARE YOU, MY GOD, AND WHO AM I?*" that we, too, may be totally turned to the Lord and enjoy a more intimate union with God and neighbor.



**SOURCE:** *The Third Order Regular Rule and Franciscan Spirituality*, Thaddeus Horgan S.A. Original Source: *Proposito #1* of the Franciscan Federation USA, Pittsburgh PA 1983; *The CORD* 42.9 (1992): 246-50; *Resource Manual for the Study of the Third Order Regular Rule*, published by the *International Franciscan Conference TOR*, Rome 2013, pp 151-155. Editor: Kathleen Moffatt OSF.

*The Fundamental Value: Conversion*, Margaret Carney OSF, given at the 1982 Rome Assembly, in *History of The Third Order Regular Rule – A Source Book*. ED. Margaret Carney OSF, Suzanne Kush cssf, Jean Francois Godet-Calogeras. Published by Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure NY 14778. 2008, pp.248-252.

#### 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. It faithfully recognizes 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.

**This synthesis was prepared by Annette Lucchese OSF**, a *Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA, who has served in education, both as teacher and principal as well as in spiritual and retreat ministries. She has ministered in congregational leadership for over twenty-four years. Annette holds degrees in Education, Reading, Administration and Supervision. Having completed the program for Spiritual Direction at the *School for Spirituality and Justice*, Bronx, NY, she now ministers as Spiritual Director and Retreat Presenter.

**ART:** Page 3, woodcut, *Artestampa di Gastone Vignati*, Assisi. Page 6, *Legenda Maior di Bonaventura*: miniature dal codice pergameneo del 1457. Roma Museo Francescano, inv.nr 1266

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