The background of the entire page is a deep blue night sky filled with numerous small white stars. A single, much larger and brighter star is positioned in the upper left quadrant, creating a prominent four-pointed starburst effect. At the bottom of the image, the dark silhouette of a mountain range stretches across the width of the page.

Celebrating
40 Years of Our
**THIRD ORDER
REGULAR RULE**
1982 – 2022

*Sacred exchange of desires,
commitment and
prophetic conviction.*

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

Prepared by Kathleen Moffatt OSF
Sponsored by Sisters of St Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA • 2022



*Representing thirty-seven countries on five continents: one hundred and ninety Superiors General with the T.O.R. Rule Work Group (incl. Margaret Carney ofsf and Thaddeus Horgan SA) at back of group with Sister Rose Cecilia and others) were received by **Pope John Paul II** in the Vatican's Clementine Hall, March, 1982. These members of the Rome Assembly, March 1-10, 1982, approved the new T.O.R. Rule.*



Celebrating

40 Years of Our

THIRD ORDER REGULAR RULE

1982 – 2022

*Sacred exchange of desires,
commitment and
prophetic conviction.*

Roland Faley TOR Minister General at the time of the writing of the Rule; Scripture scholar of the text, writes of going home that final night in Rome when article by article, chapter by chapter the new Rule was approved by near total consensus of the two hundred Superiors General after a process of several years involving over 400 TOR congregations, provinces and regions globally!

The “Work Group” were accountable for three critical tasks:

- Insistence upon a return to the proper charism of St. Francis of Assisi
- Rediscovery of the history of the Order; understanding its divergent expressions
- World-wide consultation inviting proposals for the text from *every* congregation. *Never before* in the Order’s history have the members exercised such collective responsibility and global communication.

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.”(1)

It is time to celebrate!

Ten years later, **Margaret Carney OSF**, one of the eight members of the “Work Group” writes, *when one considers that never in our history had there been an attempt to create a global consultation of the members of the Third Order Regular, the success of the efforts borders on the truly miraculous. Our “Amen!” to this Rule binds us together for a new stage of the pilgrimage of penance and peacemaking in our time.(2)*



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.



TAU Series . . . TOR

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 Volterra Letter: The First Letter to All The Faithful

Thaddeus Horgan, S.A.

The Volterra Letter shows us the way to incarnate the Gospel’s basic reality into our daily living as Franciscans.

Francis’ highest intention, his chief desire, his uppermost purpose was to observe the holy Gospel in all things, and through all things and with perfect vigilance, with all zeal, with the longing of his mind and all the fervor of his heart, in order to follow the teaching and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. He would recall Christ’s words through persistent meditation and bring to mind his deeds through the most penetrating consideration (1 Cel 84; Omnibus, 299)

This citation from Thomas of Celano is, I believe, significant to our purpose. Seeking to deepen our appreciation of the Volterra Letter is for each of us the beginning of a persistent and ongoing reflection on the life-filled words of the new Rules of the Franciscan Third Order Regular and of the Secular Franciscan Order. The Volterra Letter (1) centers the Gospel in Franciscan life. It makes us conscious of the efficacious word of God. Through it Francis shows us the way to incarnate the Gospel’s basic reality into daily living. Further, *it points out the sources Francis used to keep lively within himself, humanly speaking, the Good News who is Jesus Christ.*

These were reflection, memory, and ongoing meditation. Even a quick look at his other writings reveals Francis’ clear perspective on the Gospel. It is always Jesus Christ. He is our way to the Father.

To be a penitent . . . means to be a living vessel of God’s transforming presence and power in the world.

Again, as Celano puts it, Jesus “occupied” Francis. Francis carried the Lord in his heart, his mouth, his ears, his eyes, his hands, and all his members (1 Cel 115; Omnibus, 329). He did so because God’s unerring words of Spirit and Life state that no one comes to the Father except through Christ (Jn. 14:16). Jesus’ life is the way God’s love literally entered our world and touched the hearts of men and women.

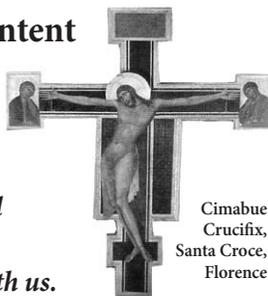
Such love must be responded to. *This is the uncomplicated substance of Franciscan spirituality.* This is why Francis preached penance, or conversion of heart, and directed that it was to be proclaimed and lived by his followers (Reg NB 23:1). The matter was simple: whoever has received the gift of salvation must live as new creation, alive in Christ (Rom. 6:11). This is the response God wants.

While there is a simple directness to Francis’ awareness of salvation, let us not think that it was simplistic. On the contrary Francis’ awareness was not only persistent but penetrating. We see this — as with all things concerning Francis — in his deeds. His followers had to proclaim repentance because Francis knew that all people need God. All people are intrinsically poor, or gospel poor, without Christ. All people also are the object of God’s selfless love. All, then, should respond to God. Again, cumulatively looked at, Francis’ writings show that he understood *metanoia* as a continuous process of abandoning the effects of sinfulness throughout life, especially that of being separated from God, and of embracing the life of union with God in Christ by the power of the Spirit. To use Francis’ words, all men and women need to replace the “spirit of the flesh” (Ep FidII 65; ef. AB 72) with the “Spirit of the Lord” (ibid., 48; AB 70).

The “spirit of the flesh” is a Pauline expression meaning that the person to whom it is applied is in the full range of his/her personality separated from God. As such, that person is the subject of sin and death. But God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying will has destined all people for transformation to glory. (2) It is in this sense that Francis uses the term in his writings. This demonstrates theological insight, we might say, but it more likely means that Francis was inspired to understand the process of redemption as it is presented in the whole of Scripture (especially the New Testament). He apparently reflected on it, kept it in the forefront of his memory, and made it the subject of his ongoing meditation. It seems to me that if we want to know well the Prologue to the new Rules of the Franciscan Third Order Regular and Secular Franciscan Order, all of this should be borne in mind because these truths are what underlie the words of the text.

Implicit Content

The cross is the expression of Christ’s selfless love and his covenanted relationship with us.

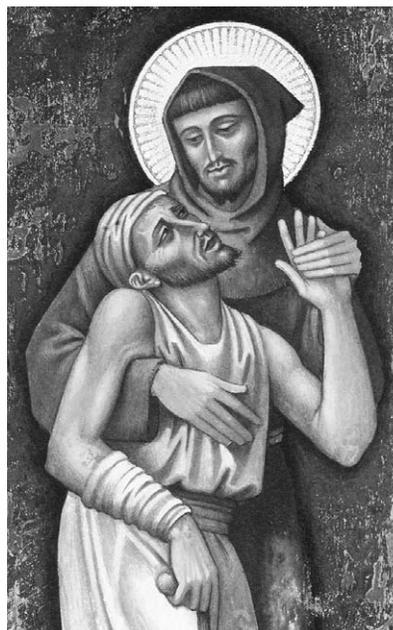


Cimabue
Crucifix,
Santa Croce,
Florence

REDEMPTION UNFOLDS in Salvation History as a series of covenants between God and his people. The covenants were unique relationships between the Lord and his chosen — relationships based on God’s choices. The fact that God chose us utterly fascinated Francis. The Lord made certain people his partners so that in and through them he would restore to humankind its original destiny of eternal life with him. God is always the initiator of covenant. Because he is God, his covenants are irrevocable. This fact awed Francis of Assisi especially in view of the fact that, as Genesis points out, humanity chose the way of “the flesh.” Yet God pursued his people, establishing partnerships with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17), with Abraham (Gen. 15:9-12), with all of Israel (Ex. 20:34), and with the Davidic Dynasty (2 Sam. 7). It was God who established these partnerships, pushing his people (if you will) toward that moment when the Person of the Word established

not only a partnership, but a relationship between God and humanity. In Christ we become the children of God. What Jesus is to the Father we now become: viz., children of God. Moreover, we receive God’s life or the living relationship within the Godhead, the Spirit of the Lord. This relationship both draws us into the very inner life of God and bonds us together into the relationship of fraternity with the Lord. Jesus now is brother to all men and women who share his life. Behind the *Volterra* Letter’s words is Francis’ living consciousness of this most gracious choice and gift of God. These must be responded to and received. This is what Franciscan life is all about.

The call to turn from the spirit of the flesh to the spirit of the Lord meant from Francis to submit oneself totally to God’s salvation and to become part of God’s salvific activity in the world. This is why deeds are so essential, in Francis’ view, for anyone committed to the life of evangelical conversion. Deeds are concrete responses to the goodness of God. God’s love and goodness are expressed in the deed of his only Son coming into the world. He is near. He is concrete. In the Incarnate Son we know the way to the Father. To do the Gospel literally, Francis’ charismatic insight into Scripture, became for him (and his followers) the path to eternal life because in Christ God becomes brother to us (Ep FidII, 56; AB 70) and among us. This is the core of Gospel life.



Piero Casentini, from San Damiano, Assisi

The Redeemer on the Cross was Francis’ perception of the Christ. This was so not only because salvation was effected there (Adm VI and Ep FidII 11-14; AB 29, 68), but because there the Son totally gave himself to the Father out of love for us. One of the reasons Francis emphasized the Eucharist is that it makes present again to us our Redemption. It is a source of redeemed life constantly being renewed in us. Celano and Bonaventure, particularly, point out Francis’ devotion to the Crucified Christ (2 Cel 211; LM IX.2, XIV.4; Omnibus, 533, 699, 739), a devotion that led him to want totally to return in kind the selfless love of God for us expressed by Christ. Just as the Redeemer emptied himself for our sake, Francis wanted his follower to empty themselves of all selfishness and worldliness as their concrete response to God’s goodness. Nothing less than Jesus’ poverty and humility is projected as the way to respond. Such a deed manifests both one’s awareness of and one’s reception of God’s new and eternal covenant relationship into one’s own life. Not to accept it is mere foolishness, as the story at the end of the *Volterra* Letter points out.

Explicit Content

(Faith and Metanoia)

THIS STORY and its style make one wonder if the *Volterra* Letter truly is a letter. There is much internal evidence to support the claim that it is actually a sermon. Bernard Tickerhoof states the case:

What we have . . . is a didactic tool. The letter is the means Francis has chosen to reach a wider audience . . . The letter form has been imposed upon the material which seems to have a more primitive oral form behind it . . . In short, there is present in the *Volterra* Letter sufficient evidence that the basic content of the piece existed first in oral form, and seems to have many of the characteristics of homiletic material. The bulk of the letter may well be an early example of Francis’ preaching, and perhaps the purest example of it that we possess.”(3)

Celano implies that in his preaching Francis gave norms to those who heeded his call to *metanoia* (1 Cel 37). Could this be where he did so? It is very possible. The simple teaching style conveys a strong message:

“Choose God or perdition.” It is straightforward both in its positive and in its negative parts, and to the point. These are marks of Francis’ style. But this is in a decidedly oral style. Like most of Francis’ writings, it also is heavily biblical. Fr. Tickerhoof documents in his study (pp. 172-73) (3). Francis’ extensive use of Scripture, especially the Johannine texts. He sees a pattern, moreover, in their use by Francis:

In the letter’s **first chapter** the core of the John material is positive and is drawn from the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel. John here records a prayer of Jesus addressed to the Father summarizing Christ’s mission and praying on behalf of his disciples, the true believers, and for those who will come to believe through their preaching. Francis has chosen material from this chapter specifically bringing out the nature of discipleship in the lives of the penitents. For Francis the penitent has been given by the Father to Christ, and has been instructed through the words of the Son. The penitent has received this teaching and has come to believe. The life of penance is tied to belief. But not only that, for by their example and perhaps by their preaching they will also lead others to believe, and thereby to do penance.



In the **second chapter** we see the flip side of the coin. The material is drawn extensively from the eighth and ninth chapters of John’s Gospel, and is decidedly negative. The references are now no longer to the disciples of Jesus but to the Jews, representing for John those who are not true believers. The thrust of the Gospel is that while claiming to be begotten of God these non-believers are really children of the devil. Moreover, they have gone beyond the point where they can truly see their own origin. They are spiritually blind, so that while claiming to have the light

they show themselves to be unaffected by it. Francis has drawn from this image of the unbeliever and has applied it to those who refuse to take up the penitential life. While they claim to be Christians, their very actions show that they are self-deceived. They have lost true wisdom, and so they have created a black future for themselves.

In the Letter there are two key lines, it seems to me that spell out its explicit teaching. These are Chapter 1, line 1, and Chapter II, line 8. They summarize the pattern that Fr. Tickerhoof sees. Both call for faith. For Francis true faith is necessary for genuine conversion of heart. *That is the Letter’s explicit message.*

Comparing this text with **Chapter 23 of the 1221 Rule**, we see the same basic idea expressed. But there it is expanded. The orthodox faith-content, so dear to Francis, is stated (Reg NB 23:1-11). His consistency regarding this is evidenced by the text. In the *Second Letter to all the Faithful*, Francis presents the content of *faith and the deeds* that manifest the efficaciousness of faith in a true penitent. The emphasis he gives to this is so strong that, when it came to update the religious tertiaries’ Rule, the writers declared in Ch. I, article 2, that

the charism of this Order is not metanoia alone but “true faith and metanoia.” So fundamental is this to Gospel living after the example of Francis, that the writers of both the new Religious and the new Secular Franciscan Tertiary Rules chose this letter as the prologue to their respective texts.

The historical reason is important; the obviously explicit relationship it gives to the two branches of the Third Order is important too; but both of these are secondary compared to the paramount place of faith in the life of all penitents.

The Spirit of the Lord

“TRUE FAITH and penance” are the constitutive elements in the Franciscan process of attaining holiness. Reflecting Scripture (Mt. 13:23), Francis would say that his true followers are those who hear God’s word and understand it (Reg NB 22:9-25). Understanding for Francis means the assimilation of the word into one’s inner self. It then issues forth in deed befitting repentance. One without the other is not

authentic. In Chapter 22 of the *Regula non Bullata* Francis details the process pursued by the opening lines of the first chapter of the *Volterra* Letter. It is well to read the two texts together.



The first four lines of the Letter deal directly with the outward conduct of a true penitent. As always Francis has Jesus’ word in mind when asked to give guidelines to the penitents. He chooses the Lord’s response to the Pharisees, those self-deceived blind leaders of the blind. This is by design. In the second chapter of these guidelines Francis will once again allude to them. What is the word of the Lord that sets right their false example — and the false example of misguided unorthodox penitents of his day?

It is the shema (Deut. 6:4-9), the people’s remembrance creed and prayer of God’s loving covenant relationship with them. Nothing less than the total turning of self to God, because God has turned to us, will suffice or ever could suffice for an authentic penitential life.

This response too must be concrete. The Lord points out how (Mt. 22:39-40), and Francis repeats his words, directing us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Concrete transformation comes through the hearing of the word with an open and converted heart.

There is a certain rhythm to the first four lines of the *Volterra* Letter. Within yourself, Francis directs, love God, then manifest this by love of neighbor. Within yourself, be aware of the weakness of humanity, then fortify yourself with the strength of the Eucharist, the very presence of Christ alive among and within us. Thus fortified, go forth and do the deeds that originate from your converted heart. A converted heart for Francis is one that continually turns from the “spirit of the flesh” and open itself to the “Spirit of the Lord.” Certainly the tendency to sin and selfishness remains. But what becomes the conscious quest of the one filled with the Spirit is to be concerned only with what pleases the Lord. A converted person, then, is one on whom the Spirit of the Lord rests, one in whom the Spirit of the Lord dwells.

Francis is not content with the biblical citation from John (14:23) which speaks of God coming to us; rather he focuses on the graced individual in his or her relationship to God and neighbor.

I believe he does so to stress that one who hears the word with an open and converted heart truly “understands” that word and is inwardly transformed. What comes forth, therefore, reflects this transformation (Mt. 15:15-19; 23:25-26; Mk. 7:18-23; Lk. 11:39-42). For Francis, this must always be concrete.

- What could be more self-consciously concrete than to describe oneself as a *spouse* because of one’s union with Christ?
- What could be more actual, biblically speaking, than to know oneself as a *brother or sister* to the Lord who, Jesus says (Mt. 12:50) does the Father’s will?
- What is more graphic than to be a *mother*, one who carries life — in this case God’s life — and who gives birth — in this case to Christlikeness — thanks to the workings of the Holy Spirit within the individual? This mystical language of Francis is far more down to earth than may first appear. Sister Kathleen Moffatt points out that the four fundamental values contained in the new Third Order Regular Rule are herein contained.(4)

Francis wants us always to be concrete because, as line 10 concludes, this God-giftedness must shine as an example for others. Once again we see how the life of



penance is tied to belief and to its lived manifestation so that others might believe and be converted. The rest of the Chapter reinforces this notion. Lines 11 to 13 repeat, almost in rhapsody form, our faith in the indwelling of the Trinity, while lines 14 through 18 repeat Christ’s High Priestly prayer (Jn. 17) for the sanctification of his disciples and for those who through them will come to believe.

Chapter 2 not only speaks of the self-deception of persons who fail to do penance because of Satan’s wiles, but also addresses the matter of those dominated by the spirit of the flesh (self-centeredness, selfishness, pride). These are totally opposite to those filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Self-centeredness causes spiritual blindness (line 7), which for Francis is

thorough. In lines 11 through 18, given his turn of phrase, one can almost hear him say that the ultimate stupidity is spiritual blindness. It makes one feel that he or she has or should have everything! Therefore Francis makes the tendency in our humanity to sin only to drive home his concluding point, which was his starting point: all should hear God’s word and “understand” it because it is spirit and life (lines 19-21).

To be a penitent, then, means

- to be *happy* in the Lord and blessed by God.
- to be a living vessel of God’s transforming presence and power in the world.
- this for all people and throughout life. That prophetic message needs to be heard today just as much as it did in Francis’ day. **Let us then bring forth worthy fruits of our conversion by proclaiming and living that message so that all may be one and the world may believe.**

1. The *Volterra* Letter in English can be found in *The CORD* 29:6 (1979), 166-6 in Cajetan Esser, *The Rule and Testament of St. Francis* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977), 221-26; in AB 62-65; and of course in the new *Third Order Regular and Secular Franciscan Rules*.
2. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, *Theological Dictionary* (London: Herder and Herder, 1965), 60.
3. Bernard Tickerhoof, T.O.R., “A Gospel Spirituality,” *The CORD* 29:6 (1979), 170.
4. Kathleen Moffatt, O.S.F., “Of Penance and the Townspeople: The Language of Francis,” *The CORD* 33:9 (1983), 288-89.

SOURCE: Thaddeus Horgan SA, “The First Letter to All the Faithful.” *The CORD* 35.10 (1985): 303-10. Also in *Resource Manual for the Study of the Third Order Regular Rule*. ED. Kathleen Moffatt OSF. International Franciscan Conference, TOR — Rome, Italy, 2013.



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, DC, 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.

TAU SERIES #1 was prepared by **Kathleen Swan**, Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia, Aston, PA. Kathleen, born in County Meath, Ireland, has shared her Franciscan life in ministry as an educator in Florida, South Carolina and Baltimore; her missionary life in Antiqua, WI and her pastoral experience as member of the Care Team in Assisi House, Aston, PA, together with persons who are in need at Anna’s Place, Chester, PA.

ART of “The Great Commandment” poster is available from Scarboro Missions, CA or www.columban.org.au/thegoldenrule.

This TAU Series . . . TOR #1 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org For additional information, contact Kathleen Moffatt OSF, General Editor, moffatt.kathleen@comcast.net

With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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

Presentation of the Text of The Rule

given in Rome, 1982, for the vote of over 190 Superiors General representing the entire world of over 180,000 Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular

By Thaddeus Horgan S.A, one of seven members of the international “Work Group.”

I. Genesis of the Text

FEW CHRISTIANS HAVE BEEN AS OPEN AND AWARE OF THE EVENT OF JESUS CHRIST IN THEIR LIVES AS FRANCIS OF ASSISI.

Francis’ radical fidelity to the Gospel made this consciousness a *continuous* experience. This awareness is part of the Franciscan charism. It is not surprising that the followers of Francis became particularly conscious of the Second Vatican Council’s call to all religious. For Franciscans the Council primarily was a renewing event in the life of Christ’s body, the Church. Through the Council the Holy Spirit called all the faithful to renewal. For Franciscans *this* was a modern call to live anew their ancient vocation to

“REBUILD MY CHURCH”

The majority of Franciscan religious looked to their communities’ constitutions to formulate their expression of renewal for our present era. But many also looked to the Rule of 1927.

A RULE is a statement of shared identity, fundamental values and basic guidelines for religious living.

We had the Church’s criteria (*Ecclesiae Sanctae* #15) to guide us. After Vatican II the 1927 Rule seemed to be a “timed” document. Somehow it seemed unable to state our identity or shared values *inspiringly*. Further it did not reflect the Church’s *new directives* nor project our Gospel life in a biblical fashion or in a style that reflected clearly the spirit of our founder. For some also it did not address the signs of the times.

Prompted by the Church’s guidelines, serious study of the Rule began. In many places, the purpose of this study was “**trying to recapture again the spirit of the founder.**” Many communities rediscovered the “Franciscanism” of their founders. Other congregations were concerned with

- the origin of our shared charism;
- Francis’ **influence** on it and its *lived historic expression* in the Third Order Congregations; Still others concentrated on
- Francis’ inspiration as this is set forth in his authenticated writings,

Because the Franciscan movement is eight hundred years old. It is only natural that different approaches to the same purpose were taken. Histories, experiences, perceptions are different. Yet, it seems safe to say, these have been all part of God’s providence enriching the Franciscan movement in our day.

Ecclesiae Sanctae

III, #15 – Pope Paul VI

#15. The norms and spirit to which adaptation and renewal must correspond should be gathered not only from the “Decree *Perfectae Caritatis* but also from other documents of the Second Vatican Council, especially from chapters 5 & 6 of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*.

The differing approaches to the matter of the “**spirit of the founder**” resulted in several documents:

1. “The French Document” placed emphasis on poverty, minority and the bonds that unite TOR congregations to Orders of Friars Minors.
2. “The Madrid Document” with its emphasis on biblical “*metanoia*” and Francis’ conversion experiences and how these speak to the meaning of the vows, fraternal life and ministry.
3. “The Dutch Rule” which emphasized Vatican II’s renewal program and related to Franciscan living.
 - * It even resulted in a renewed appreciation for the Rule of 1927 which, despite its language, does contain the values *historically* associated with the Third Order Regular.

At first these four paths did not lead to a shared experience of renewal. They caused tension! But by 1980 the Work Group of the International Franciscan Commission was able to come together, to learn from these documents and to be enriched by them and by those who worked so hard to produce them. None of the values presented in these documents contradicted the others. *Rather, they represent various aspects of the same inspiration which the Lord gave to St. Francis.* All were important, even essential, to the renewal process. **The Brussels Text** which you have received, we believe, is faithful to Francis’ inspiration, to the historic expressions of that inspiration in Third Order Regular Congregations existing throughout the world today, and to its more recent antecedents: The Rule of 1927, the “French Document,” and the “Madrid Statement” and the “Dutch Rule”. II.



II. An Inspirational Text

FRANCIS wanted his followers to be authentic GOSPEL PEOPLE.

What comes from the hearts of people makes them what they are. (cf. Mt. 15, 10-20). Inspired by the Lord, Francis proposed to us, his followers, basic Gospel values and attitudes so that we could be truly disciples and radical followers of Jesus Christ.

Only when we have truly assimilated and made these values and attitudes part of ourselves can it be said that we will “do the Gospel literally.”

The Brussels Text’s intent is singular: to state Francis’ vision of our life of total and continuous conversion to God and neighbor through the literal living of the Gospel.

In doing this it presents us with those with those basic values and attitudes which Francis indicated are necessary for radical evangelical living. The text challenges us to grasp these values to experience their dynamism, and to be truly a Gospel people within the Church and for the world.

What the text does not do is set forth regulations or laws. Each congregation has a Constitution for that. According to Church norms, Constitutions are to apply Canon law, the particular charism of individual founders, cultural circumstances, particular customs, and the Rule to each congregation. With reference to the Rule, Constitutions apply its values, attitudes and principles to a particular congregation. *The inspiration of each particular founder is important in this process.*

The difference between what goes into the Rule and Constitutions can be shown by an example. There is *nothing* in this Rule

text **about vows** except the *first* sentence. In fact apart from mentioning chastity *once* in each of the Rules of 1221 and 1223, Francis never quotes it directly again. Francis does speak several times of the evangelical values that chastity could represent — as does this text — in much the same way as Vatican II did.

The Canonical *objectives* of poverty and obedience are material enunciation and doing the legitimate commands of a superior.



When Francis speaks of *poverty and obedience* he does not give us regulations, but the example of the life and deeds of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the incarnation of the attitudes and values that the vows represent. Francis would have us live poverty and obedience maximally.

From the Franciscan perspective the Canonical vows only express the minimum. For the people dedicated to the total surrender self to God through radical fidelity to the Gospel much more needs to be projected. Francis does this by noting the motive and style of the life of the Lord. This is why the **Brussels text** quoting Francis directs us to

“ . . . hold fast to the words, the life, the teaching and the Holy Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Reg. NB 22, s41)

It is a statement of fundamental Gospel living which highlights the supreme and the only Rule — Our Lord Jesus Christ — as Francis was inspired to know, follow and love Him.



THERE IS NO EXCLUSIVE WAY TO LIVE THE GOSPEL. THE MULTIPLICITY OF CONGREGATIONS AND THE ORDERS IN THE CHURCH DEMONSTRATE THIS.

Inspired by the Lord and influenced by the circumstances of his time, Francis pointed out three ways to live the Gospel. Thus, there are three orders. This is why

we say that the Franciscan charism is always inclusive and never exclusive. In the **Third Order Regular** there are several hundred Congregations, some of apostolic life, others contemplative, still others are active-contemplatives. Historically, we all have the one Rule even though we are in masculine and feminine congregations. This attests to the universality of Gospel life even within our tradition of Franciscanism. This is part of our heritage. Each of our congregations has its own proper characteristics (*propria indolis*). Often we are localized and reflect particular cultures. These factors show the richness of our diversity. Yet we are one because we have shared with all these points in mind. This was possible because we followed the Church's directives and **turned to the actual sources of Francis' original inspiration, in his own words.**

Spirit, Inspiration and Charism

are all gifts of the Holy Spirit and not dependent on words. Yet the Spirit moves people to express these gifts in words as all sacred Scripture manifests. The words of Francis, therefore, have a special significance. They capture his experience of Gospel values and attitudes which the Lord inspired him to live. We felt that we could more faithfully project Francis' Gospel way of life if we used his own words in the Rule. . . . Moreover, his words could make our text "classic" not time bound as the present Rule of 1927 is.

If this text is adopted, the *Rule of the Third Order Regular* would be in Francis' words for the **first time in history**. Consultation indicated clearly that this would be welcomed by all of our Brothers and our Sisters.

Using Francis' words could make the text a source for life-long reflection and on-going formation. To appreciate fully the content of the text, a knowledge of Franciscan sources and history is necessary. Just as Scripture should be studied constantly, so should our Rule text. This would help us to embrace our heritage more. The words of Francis, we hope, will make this text not just a document, but an inspiration to share and to hand on to future Franciscans.

III. A Text of Fundamental Values

With an order as large and diverse as our **Third Order Regular** it can be legitimately asked:

How does one determine what the FUNDAMENTAL VALUES of our Franciscan life are?

The Church in General Council has given us the criteria to ascertain these. They are

1. **Return to the spirit of the founder**
2. **Rediscover history because charisms are relived and**
3. **Consult all in the congregation to learn the living convictions about charism**

This in fact is what we did. Much resource work had already been compiled when the Work Group convened because of the studies done in preparing the "French Document," the "Madrid Statement," and the "Dutch Rule." The Work Group itself experienced a gradual coming to one mind through a process of study, prayer, reflection and sharing. Small, significant discoveries were made. For example,

- Those among us who are especially sensitive to our heritage from the Order of Penance came to realize that for Francis, total and continuous conversion meant living the Gospel literally.
- Those of us more oriented to Francis' plan for evangelical life with emphasis on poverty and minority realized that the beginning of all evangelical life is *metanoia*.
- Our study of the writings of Francis and the history and the spirituality of the **Third Order Regular** further led us to the shared conclusion that in all there are four fundamental values involved in our Franciscan Gospel living. These must be interiorized before all the manifestations of Gospel life associated with Franciscan living can be called authentic.

We learned that simplicity, joy, fraternity and the ministries of charity and of justice for peace are all manifestations of more fundamental values. Interestingly our studies were done separately. But our discoveries were shared experiences!

We prepared a copy of the Rule Text (**Reute Draft**) which was circulated to the congregations.

The consultation was the greatest and widest ever undertaken within our Order.

What was truly historic about it were the results. The conclusions were the same as those of the Work Group affirming our findings and reflections.

- **Therefore,**
 - * **From the writings of Francis,**
 - * **from a study of the Third Order Regular history, and**
 - * **from the current existential awareness of our brothers and sisters, we can say that**
 - **METANOIA, PRAYER, POVERTY AND MINORITY are the four FUNDAMENTAL VALUES of our THIRD ORDER REGULAR FRANCISCAN LIFE.**
- The value of this Rule text make it a spiritual document. In the past these values were interpreted and will be in the future. We received an authentic call to renewal. For Franciscans this is the call to the Gospel life that we call "Franciscan." Under Holy Spirit's the guidance **here and now** you have come to affirm or deny authoritatively what we propose as our way of life. This is far more important than merely approving a document or not.

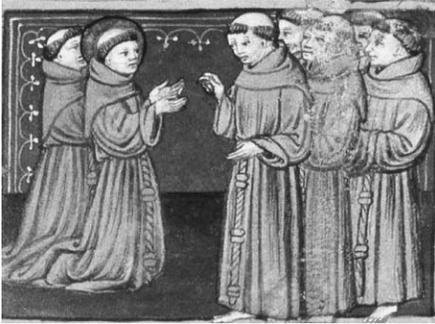
IV. The Document Itself

Nevertheless, a word about the document itself must be said.

As the vehicle you commissioned, you should know that it was developed as you requested: namely, to express briefly, clearly and explicitly **the fundamental values of our Franciscan Gospel.**

We developed a sequence of values that generally follows Francis' **Rule of 1221**. This Rule, along with other writings, **but especially this Rule**, guided us in giving expression to how Francis reflectively unfolded the implications of Gospel life based on the four fundamental values.

This sequence, we feel, helped us to be faithful to Francis' spirit. This Rule will not be confused with those of the *minorite* (OFM, OFM Conv., and OFM Cap.) or *clarissan* (Poor Clares) traditions.



Nevertheless, our *proposed* text still preserves the unity of the Franciscan family by recognizing the inclusiveness of the overall Franciscan charism (literal Gospel living) with its explicit reference (article 3) to mutual communion with all branches of the Franciscan Movement. **No other Franciscan Rule does this.**

And wherever they are, or in whatever situation they are in, they should diligently and fervently show reverence and honor to one another. They should also foster unity and communion with all the members of the Franciscan family. TOR Rule, chapter 1, article 3

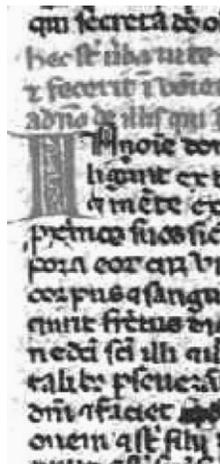
The original **Reute Text** had twelve chapters which after consultation was brought to eight Chapters. We achieved this by combining four chapters into two, eliminating one chapter and, guided us in giving expression choosing shorter texts from Francis words. The eliminated chapter was the one on chastity, since

Francis did not write directly about it. The evangelical values that a chaste life represent are stated in articles 7 and 8 on chastity in the **Reute Text**.

Ruete Text, article 7

When the period of probation is complete, let them be received to obedience as they promised to observe this life and rule always. For according to the holy Gospel no one putting a hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. (Lk 9:62).

Finally, permit me to point out that the proposed text has a **Prologue** and an **Epilogue**.



The **Epilogue** was requested by many congregations. Because it was the conclusion to the **1927 Rule**, it is a link to that document serves to show the continuity of our Order's efforts for its own ongoing renewal.

A **Prologue** is offered to show its historical linkages also. It contains such things as Francis' first **LETTER TO THE BROTHERS OF PENANCE**. (The *Volterra Letter*) * SEE *Tau Series #1*.

As such it points to the *origins* of our form of Franciscan Gospel life in the ancient order of Penance. Moreover, it is a prologue to the already approved 1978 **Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order**. Our modern brothers and sisters in the Secular Franciscan Order share with us the *centrality of conversion* in our way of Gospel living. The Work Group suggests that it be chosen for inclusion by those congregations which find it particularly significant to their own histories and spirit.

We have tried to be faithful to our own mandate, to the Spirit of St Francis and to our brothers and sisters in the Third Order Regular.

We present you with the results of our work. During these days we will share our reflections on this text's content with you. We will pray with you. We will serve you in your service to all our brothers and sisters in our Franciscan congregations.

May the Spirit be with us all so that we may be enlivened by

THE SPIRIT OF FRANCIS!

SOURCE: *History of The Third Order Regular Rule – A Source Book*. ED. Margaret Carney OSF, Suzanne M. Kush CSSF, Jean François Godet-Calogeras. Published by Franciscan Institute Publication, St. Bonaventure University, St. Bonaventure, NY 14778. 2008. Pp.242-247.



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, DC, 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.

TAU SERIES #2 was prepared by **Belle Garrett**, born in Elkton, MD, *Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia*. With M.A.'s in Spanish and Bilingual-bicultural education, Belle has also brought a rich Counseling and Psychology background as a school administrator, director of a Franciscan Peace Center and Spiritual Director. She has served in several States from Maryland to Massachusetts

ART: *Legenda Maior* di S.Bonaventura: miniature dal codice pergameneo del 1457. *Roma Museo Francescano, inv.nr 1266*.

This TAU Series . . . TOR #2 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org For additional information, contact Kathleen Moffatt OSF, General Editor, moffatt.kathleen@comcast.net

With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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.



TAU Series . . . TOR

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

"We - all together - and each one of us - are the trustees of our Charism, its responsible bearers, accountable to God and the ecclesial community for it."

Key Concepts of the Third Order Regular Rule

PROLOGUE

The words of St. Francis to his followers:
Epistola ad fideles: Recensio prior.



- This Volterra Letter points to the origins of our form of Franciscan gospel life in the ancient Order of Penance.
- It clearly reflects Francis' *BIBLICAL* understanding of *METANOIA*.
- In striking imagery (*SPOUSE, BROTHER, MOTHER*) illustrating the action of the spirit in realizing Christian conversion, Francis places in bold relief the focal point of Christian and Franciscan penance.
- Chapter One of this letter is also the Prologue of the 1978 Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order.

CHAPTER I: OUR IDENTITY

The brothers and sisters of this order wish to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility. #2

- This Chapter summarizes the whole Rule and specifically identifies who we are in the Church.
- Article One expresses the unity of the whole Franciscan movement. Using Francis' words to the religious of his day (Ep. Fid. II, 36-40) it also presents us with Vatican II's teaching on religious life.
- Article Two notes the centrality of *METANOIA* in TOR spirituality and as such is the Charism Statement of the Order.

- Our fidelity to the Church, the Order, the Congregation and one another is one of obedience and reverence. Chapter One helps us grasp the all-embracing nature of OBEDIENCE in the thought of Francis.

CHAPTER II: ACCEPTANCE INTO THIS LIFE

Led by God, let them begin a life of penance conscious that all of us must be continuously and totally converted. #6

- Articles 4, 5, and 6 follow Francis' own conversion journey. For him, divesting self of all that could hinder total conversion is requisite for the journey in Christ's footprints.
- This Chapter presents the principle found in Francis' writings of mutual responsibility for our gospel life and for one another. In Article 6 it gives the first explicit references to the essentially formative character of Franciscan living of *ONGOING CONVERSION*.
- Articles 7 and 8 present a summary of Francis' understanding of continuous conversion through gospel living: *POSITIVE SURRENDER of one's whole being TO GOD AND GOD'S SERVICE*. (The Shema)
- Article 7 "to be received into obedience": instead of commitment to an enclosed life, one is bound to a familial relationship with others equally committed to total conversion and the observance of the holy gospel.



CHAPTER III. THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

From the depths of their inner life, let them love, honor, adore, serve, praise, bless and glorify our most high and eternal God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. #9

- This Chapter summarizes key elements of prayer in the Franciscan tradition: To give God CEASELESS praise and thanksgiving for all God has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Jesus Christ.
- Francis calls his followers to prayer with a decidedly *contemplative* dimension.
- Praying the Liturgy of the Hours is a form of intercessory prayer for the Church and the world, as well as a sign of fidelity to the Church.
- Participation in the Eucharist should become the byword of renewed and reformed Eucharistic theology and practice among us.

- The respect for the holy Name and the sacred character of the words of the Gospels is, for Francis, a sign of CONVERSION and our readiness to put the God's Word into effect.
- Article 13 gives the SECOND meaning of POENITENTIA in the writings of Francis - the confession of one's sins. Our penitence must be honest and without affectation. Simplicity and humility are its signs. Conversion of heart is the FIRST meaning of METANOIA for Francis.
- This Chapter defines prayer as a fundamental value in our form of life. It is the marrow of our Franciscan spirituality.

CHAPTER IV: THE LIFE OF CHASTITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE KINGDOM.

Professing chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:12), they are to care for the things of the Lord and "they seek nothing else except to follow the will of God and to please God (1 Co 7:32). #15

- This chapter reflects the influence of Vatican II's theology of religious life.
- The Franciscan life of gospel penance becomes a reality when we no longer place any obstacle to God's work within us.
- Francis always speaks of prayer with adoration in conjunction with purity of heart "to pray unceasingly with a heart free from self-interest." 1223:10



- Article 15 emphasizes that the love of neighbor is the norm for determining our grasp of the vow of chastity and whether in fact we are "giving birth to the Lord by our loving deeds." (The Shema)
- In article 17 special reference is made to MARY, LADY AND QUEEN. We honor her who "made the Lord of Majesty our brother." 2C 198; who opened her heart in total gift of faith to the action of the Holy Spirit.
- Profound devotion to Our Lady, Mother and Queen, is the logical consequence of the preeminence of Jesus Christ in the spirituality of Francis and of all Franciscans. L.M. 9:3; 2:8: 3:1; 2C 83.

CHAPTER V: THE WAY TO SERVE AND WORK

Let the sisters and brothers be gentle, peaceful, and unassuming, mild, and humble, speaking respectfully to all in accord with their vocation. #20



- The fundamental value of MINORITY is emphasized in this chapter. METANOIA and Christ's announcement of the nearness of the reign of God (Mk. 1:15) are inextricably linked because childlikeness, MINORITY, is the one thing necessary for entrance into the Kingdom. (Mt. 18:13; Mk 10:16; Lk 18:17; Jn 3)
- This Chapter considers those attitudes which Francis projects as necessary for us to be *MINORES practically*. The constant tradition of the Third Order and the continuing current teaching of the Church calls us to this value. The spirit of the Beatitudes is present here.
- Seeking to be little and humble we should never desire to possess material goods, authority or power. Because of the choice to be poor, we serve and work with a spirit of prayerfulness, conscientiousness and fidelity.
- Francis saw the ability to serve and work as a grace given by God. Through service and work we can give back to God all that was given to us.

CHAPTER VI: THE LIFE OF POVERTY

The truly poor in spirit, following the example of the Lord, live in this world as pilgrims and strangers (cf. Jn 2:5). They neither appropriate nor defend anything as their own. #22

- Poverty is both personal and social. It means not appropriating anything to ourselves, neither our wills or talents or any tasks. Evangelical poverty calls us to be totally open only to the riches of God.
- Self-emptying is the process involved in Franciscan poverty. It implies total dependence on Providence and is safeguarded by identification with the poor and "doing deeds befitting our conversion."
- MARY is mentioned in this chapter deliberately because it is in the context of Christ's saving activity that Franciscan Marian devotion is centered.
- As a community and as individuals we present ourselves as servants whom no one need fear because we seek to serve and not to dominate.

CHAPTER VII: FRATERNAL LOVE

Let them manifest their love for each other in deeds (cf. 1 Jn 3:18). With confidence let them make known their needs to one another so that each can find and offer to the other that which is necessary. #23

- By the inspiration and power of the Spirit, our Gospel life means being ever open to a deeper relationship with God in Christ in whose footsteps we walk. Our loving service to each other and all creatures manifest this relationship.
- Our CONVERSION, PRAYER, POVERTY, and MINORITY are enfolded in the “fraternity” where we experience the Lord giving us the power to love one another.
- We are made aware of the need for personal and shared responsibility for our life together realistically expressed in RECONCILIATION.
- The practical expression of METANOIA is in forgiving and in asking pardon. This is the imperative of our Franciscan life.



*“... as there was one faith
in them, so was there one spirit
in them, one will, one love.”
Titans I*

CHAPTER VIII: THE OBEDIENCE OF LOVE

Let them neither dominate nor seek power over one another, but let them willingly serve and obey “one another with the mutual love which comes from the spirit” (cf. Ga 5:13). This is the true and holy obedience of Our Lord Jesus Christ. #25

- The fundamental attitude necessary for genuine conversion is OBEDIENCE and the framework of evangelical obedience is the brotherhood or sisterhood.
- Francis’ form of life is characterized by obedience as much as by poverty because it is based on METANOIA, the inspiration of the Lord given to each member to live the Gospel completely.
- Conforming our wills to God’s plan for humanity’s redemption involves witness and ministry for the sake of true justice. Our mission is to be messengers of God’s reconciliation.
- The Chapter, as an explicit structure enabling us repeatedly to renew our living and ministry, is described as the first vehicle for rendering obedience.

- While the limits of obedience are defined, Franciscan tradition clearly affirms the role of the minister whose personal authority is meant to be of service to unity, reconciliation, and fidelity within the fraternity.
- The relationship of poverty to obedience is clearly presented as not appropriating or possessing any office, ministry, assignment, or service.

CHAPTER IX: APOSTOLIC LIFE

In every place and circumstance let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high God, Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds. #31



- This chapter is a culmination of all that precedes it. The particular emphasis of this section is the description of the quality of mission, of service that flows from the inner dynamism of the Spirit.
- Since METANOIA is our basic charism, its relationship to apostolic action capsuled in the Great Commandment should be seen as the cornerstone of our Franciscan apostolic spirit. Francis projects the *Activity of Service* as an extension of prayer.
- Our works of Charity represent our shared charism because no matter now our constitutions specify our ministries, the works of Charity *ANNOUNCE GOD'S PEACE*. Basic to all our energies for peace is personal presence and a spirituality manifested by deeds.
- This Chapter, and article 30 in particular is our expression of the TOR response to the Church's call: "to be present in the heart of the world. . . action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a CONSTITUTIVE dimension of the preaching of the Gospel." This call to witness to justice in the world is central to the text concerning our apostolic lives.
SYNOD OF BISHOPS, 1971, JUSTICE IN THE WORLD
- The use of Legend of the Three Companions #58 in article 30 calls for an integration of personal presence and spirituality with external deeds. This is indeed a valuable criteria for discerning our apostolic effectiveness.
- In article 31, poverty is expressed in the humility and simplicity that refers all good to God. Our tasks of prayer, working, and serving others are not personal riches or talents that we may appropriate to ourselves. By our CONSTANT THANKFULNESS we witness to this very important aspect of our Third Order apostolic spirituality.

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SOURCE: *Guidebook on the Third Order Regular Rule*, Franciscan Federation TOR, Washington, DC, 1984 (out of print)

ART BY: Kay Frances Berger OSF, Joliet, IL.

This TAU Series . . . TOR #3 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org
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With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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

“The Letter to All The Faithful - Recensio prior”

from A Biblical-Theological View of Penance
and Its Present Day Expression

Roland J. Faley, T.O.R.

Recent publication of an earlier recension of the Letter to the Faithful gives ample evidence that it was directed by Francis to the Penitents of his time. Whether or not this was seen by Francis as a *Rule of Life* for the Penitents remains a matter of dispute; there can be no doubt however that the document presents features of the penitential life which were important in Francis’ eyes.

There can be no doubt about the importance of the Recensio prior in understanding the beginnings of the Franciscan penitential tradition

It was for this reason that it was included as a prologue to the new (1978) Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order (and later in 1982, of the Rule of the Third Order Regular).

Of particular note is the document’s strong evangelical tone. This is one of the characteristic features of the *authentic* writings of Francis, who wanted the ideas he set forth to be those of the Scriptures and not his own. This clearly distinguishes, for example, the Rule of the Minors, so heavily accented with Scriptural references, from the *Memoriale Propositi* of the Penitents, which contains little which is distinctive of Francis, with its uninspiring juridical norms.

Of particular interest for us is the extent to which the *Recensio prior* reflects the *biblical* concepts of conversion. Verses 2-5 give a description of “those who do penance.” Both the *terminus a quo* and the *terminus ad quem* are present. The penitents are those who “hate their bodies with their vices and sins.” The expression is starkly medieval, but it expresses the reality of recognition of sinfulness and the need for divine mercy, the starting point for conversion. In terms of *new* direction taken, we are on open-ended Gospel terms.

Converts or real penitents are those who “love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with all their strength, and love their neighbor as themselves.” In producing “worthy fruits of penance,” the *internal* character of conversion is given its *external* expression. But notice, Francis begins with the *theological reality* and only then speaks of its visible manifestation.

There is no question of simply adopting penitential norms and practices or beginning with the “fruits” rather than the inner “turning.”

In these opening verses, the Letter epitomizes the dynamics of *metanoia*, the radical turning from self to God.

But in Christian terms all of this is impossible apart from the *action of God*. It was the power of Yahweh that cleansed Isaiah’s sinful lips. In a New Testament context, *this is the Holy Spirit*. Verses 7-8 of the document draw on Isaiah (11:2), as well as the Gospel of John (14:23) and Matthew (5:45) to illustrate the *action of the Spirit* in realizing Christian conversion. It is the *Spirit* that binds the soul to Christ and effects that ever more intense union which is central to Christian *metanoia*. This concept of an ever stronger attachment to the Lord is brought out in figures of speech which are characteristic of Francis. Together with being daughters and sons of God we are also “*spouses, brothers and sisters, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” (v8-9)

The image of the divine *spouse* is biblical, found in the prophets, the Gospels, and the Pauline literature. In the penitential context, it concretizes the idea of the Spirit-effected union with Christ. The Christians who detach themselves from sin and selves are not engaged in an essentially negative exercise. It is their total surrender to Christ that makes of *detachment* a necessary concomitant. In using the *spouse image*, Francis places the emphasis on this positive aspect. (v10). With Christ becoming ever more the center of the person’s existence, then death to self is essential if the spouse is to remain faithful.

The affirmation of our *brotherhood (sisterhood)* with Christ (v11), again the fruit of conversion, is found in the Gospel and in Paul. Francis draws directly on the Synoptic tradition in his reference to those who fulfill “the will of the Father who is in heaven.” (Mt12:50). It is the celebrated passage on the true relatives of Jesus, in the Synoptic tradition that specifies the kin of Christ, not in terms of blood, but in terms of obedience to a common Father. Paul carries this relationship concept forward on an ontological basis. In Galatians (4:4-7), it is the Spirit of God’s son, which we now share, that enables us to address our one Father, “Abba,” just as Christ himself does. By reason of our adoption we are made part of God’s family and, in the Spirit, a sister or brother of Jesus.

That we are “mothers” of Jesus (v12-13) is Scriptural only by implication and a very free use of imagery. The underlying reality, however, is important. This *motherhood* is related to the twofold idea: the presence of Christ within us and the birth of Christ in our life and example. Christ lives in us (Gal2:20), not in the flesh but in the spirit, with the result that Paul can speak alternately of Christ in us or the Spirit in us, the latter making of us God’s temple.(1Cor6:19-20) But as we have already noted, this life in Christ is not hidden; it is to be made manifest, with

the *Recensio* drawing on the Synoptic “light of the world” image. We *give birth* to Christ when by our fruits his presence within us is known.

Hence the image of Christ as spouse, brother, and son are different aspects of the single reality. Conversion is positive and dynamic, unifying and intense, both in the Gospel and in Francis.

The last part of the *Recensio prior* (v27-55) is addressed to those who have neglected their penitential calling, in yielding to the interests of “sinful flesh.” The strong and rather harsh tone of the exhortation should not blind us to the fact that it is a *summons to reconciliation*. One of the main concerns of the genuinely penitential spirit is that *love of neighbor* which expresses itself in seeking the lost sheep, in reconciling the unreconciled. It is the power of God’s word that is capable of effecting this transposition, and the penitents are to consider themselves *ministers of this saving word*. As we read in the document’s conclusion: “*All those into whose hands this letter shall have come we ask in the charity that is God to accept kindly and with divine love the fragrant words of our Lord Jesus Christ quoted above.*” (v51-52)

It is my belief that an analysis of the *Recensio prior* of the Letter to All the Faithful , written for the penitents, clearly reflects the biblical understanding of *metanoia*. If the life of medieval penitents prior to Francis was regulated to a great extent by the type of juridical norms that we find in the *Memoriale Propositi*, it must be admitted that Francis strove to place the penitential tradition in a genuine evangelical spirit.

Francis speaks of penance in covenant terms, an engagement in the paschal mystery, which entails both a new life and a daily dying. The emphasis does not fall on penitential acts, though they unquestionably had their place in a medieval spirituality. In striking imagery, which accents our oneness with Christ, Francis places in bold relief the focal point of Christian and, we might add, FRANCISCAN penance.

Source: THE ASSISI CONGRESS ON FORMATION

Third Order Regular Franciscans, Loretto PA. US
Charles M. Henry Printing Company
Greensburg PA
Published - 1979

Also SOURCES FOR THE

STUDY of THE TOR RULE

Franciscan Federation TOR -
817 Varnum ST. NE
Washington DC 20017 - USA

The CORD 42:9 (1992)

Guest Editorial

Genesis . . . The 1982 Rule — a personal remembrance

ROLAND J. FALEY, T.O.R.

It is hard to believe that a decade has passed since the present pope approved the new **Rule of the Franciscan Third Order Regular** on December 8, 1982. It is even more difficult for some of us to remember that the Rule's inception began for members of the Third Order Regular family ten years before that. I was privileged to be part of that from the start.

To pinpoint an actual date is not easy twenty years after the fact. I remember the first conversations taking place in my office in Rome on a beautiful fall day in 1972. It was a highly theoretical, unfocused talk between Thaddeus Horgan, S. A. and myself about the inadequacy of the 1927 Rule in the light of the Council and all the work that had been done subsequently on the T.O.R. charism.

In both of our communities, the work of revising constitutions had already begun and we regretted the absence of a strong basic document, owned by all Tertiaries, to give direction to the work of revision. We ruminated aloud about the possibilities of revising the Rule, the alleged sacred and untouchable character of which remained an almost undiscussed given. We had no idea of what the possibilities were. But with the undaunted and mindless courage of youth (certainly true at the time!), we decided to test the waters and attempt a revision of the Rule. Our task was gargantuan, of course, in light of the fact that several hundred congregations of Franciscans followed the Rule. Moreover, the greater number of these were women.

*Roland Faley was Minister General of the Third Order Regular Friars at the time of the writing of the new Rule. His biblical scholarship on **metanoia** and his study of the 800 year tradition of Francis' Third Order led to the Order's self-understanding as modern day penitents.*

*Presently, Roland is Spiritual Director for the religious and clerics of the diocese of Austin, Texas. His new book **FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOUNTAIN, Preaching and Teaching The Sunday Readings** will be published by Paulist Press at Christmas time.*

Nonetheless we began work in earnest in 1973 to produce the first draft of a new Rule based on the Order's largely rediscovered charism, conversion of life or *metanoia*. Since the congregations with which we had an historical and direct contact were the male communities, we first wanted to measure their reaction to the initiative. The men had their own organization, known as the Inter-obediential Congress, which had met periodically over the past twenty year period. Therefore, we had a structure in place through which to work. The men and women had no history of a joint organization wherein common issues were addressed. During the generalate of Louis Secondo, T.O.R., after consultation with the other men's communities, it was decided to hold another international meeting to explore the possibility of a revised Rule. There was a unanimous consensus around the idea. The meeting was set for April, 1974, in Madrid, Spain. For the first time, representatives of women's congregations were asked to join us. The enthusiastic reception which the whole idea evoked was most encouraging.

In the meantime Thaddeus and I, with the help of valuable experts in matters Franciscan, worked on the draft to be presented for consideration in Madrid. The document was wholly centered around the conversion theme; the vows were seen as an expression of conversion. There was the earnest effort to remain true to Francis' own vision as expressed in his writings, as well as the best values found in the various revisions of the Rule through history. The Madrid Congress took the draft article by article, made its own recommendations, and then gave the final version its approval. This became known as the **Madrid Statement**, which circulated widely in the Franciscan Tertiary world during the next decade. Many communities included it with their revised constitutions as an expression of charism.

As encouraging as all of this was, we were still far from a revised Rule. Little did we realize at the time how far away we were. There were landmines in abundance on the terrain still to be traveled. It became evident as work on the **Madrid Statement** progressed that other Franciscan bodies, in particular countries, had already launched their own initiatives to revise the Rule. Efforts were well underway in France, Germany and Holland. The most prominent of these, the French undertaking, was much further ahead than we. By the mid-1970's, the Tertiary congregations in France and many in Italy had lined up in support of this Rule project, which was written for women only.

We realized that to continue along separate tracks, without bringing these initiatives together, could be disastrous by ultimately splintering a centuries-old unity around a single Rule. It would be even worse if the division were along lines of gender. The Vatican had indicated that a joint undertaking should be pursued. Yet all of this was more easily said than done. We were no longer at the beginning stage. Much work had already been done and approved on both sides. After much thought, a new collaborative effort was seen as essential, one to be marked by diplomatic expertise as much as by history or theology.

At this point there were only two main contenders for Rule revision: the French document, intended only for women, and marked by strong Minorite leanings; and the **Madrid Statement**, intended for women and men, and focused mainly on the tertiary or Penitential charism. The French work had been remarkably well done, with great fidelity to Franciscan sources and largely drawing on the words of Francis himself. What it lacked was any strong reliance on the Tertiary history and tradition. What the **Madrid Statement** lacked, with all its clarity regarding charism and its inclusiveness of men and women, was that strong emergence of original Franciscan sources that the French had drawn on so effectively.

The two groups decided to come together to work out a compromise position. Most of the 1970's, after Madrid, were spent in tackling what gave every appearance of being irreconcilable differences. In his Master's thesis, **The Development of the New Third Order Regular Rule**, Paul McMullen, T.O.R. has capably outlined every step of this journey. But in recounting facts, much of the emotional investment is omitted. And that, at this point, is all for the best. Suffice it to say that more than one gathering ended in a spirit of total frustration. There were moments when both sides felt that it might be better to go it alone. But there was always some glimmer of hope. A joint working group was finally established to work out a compromise document. Both Thaddeus Horgan, and Margaret Carney, O.S.F. represented Madrid's best interest in a collaborative mode and played a vital role in the felicitous outcome.

The day finally arrived. March 1982. Ten years after **Genesis I**; eight years after Madrid. Some two hundred Franciscan major superiors of women and men, representing nearly two hundred thousand religious, gathered in Rome to debate, amend, and hopefully approve a new Rule of the Third Order Regular. I remember heading toward the large hall for the opening session with a deep sense of foreboding. We had made gains in understanding but I was by no means certain that these were sufficient. As the representative of my own Order, which takes its roots in the first group of Francis' Penitents, I could not vote in favor of a document that did not express satisfactorily the origins and charism of our Institute. I went to the opening with fear and trepidation. It was the beginning of ten vitally important days.

Ever so slowly my outlook changed. I could actually feel the answer to prayer. The Spirit was in the atmosphere. Attitudes changed; friendships were made; logic held sway. Defending one's turf was not center stage. People were searching for the good of the whole. A sense of openness prevailed. Both viewpoints had their defenders and they did it well. The value of the penitential charism never had better defenders than the Franciscan women generals from the United States, members of the Franciscan Federation. They had done their homework well and were highly qualified to address the issues. But they were not intransigent nor were the champions of the French document. Inclusion of men and women in the Rule's purview was by this time a foregone conclusion.

What began to emerge was the realization that we could have the best of two worlds. The French had drawn on four fundamental Franciscan values in constructing the Rule. These it was felt were important and shared by all Franciscans. Moreover, the French let Francis speak for himself in articulating the values, without extraneous commentary. This was a genuine plus. What Madrid proponents argued with effectiveness was the necessity of highlighting one of the four values, conversion of life, since to treat it on the same plane as the other values would betray the penitential tradition. This direction was overwhelmingly accepted by the hall. The overarching priority of conversion can be seen clearly in a careful reading of the Rule.

On the final working day, the Rule was approved article by article, chapter by chapter. There were few dissenting votes. The consensus of some two hundred participants was practically unanimous. I remember going home that final night, knowing that we had made history. This was an event not to be repeated in our lifetime and probably that of many others. There was 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".

The text of the rule went to the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes where it received some minor modifications. It was approved by Pope John Paul II before the end of 1982. Of course, Rules are not like books or finished projects. If the proof of the pie is in the eating of it, the proof of a Rule is in the living of it. Only history will tell how effective the work of the last twenty years has been. My own terms as Minister General of our Order ended within months after the Rule's approval. And let it be said for the record that I felt that it was a great note to end on. The 1982 Rule will outlive all of us. It has already outlived one of its prime architects, Thaddeus Horgan, who was one of the first to be called home. I was not present for his funeral. But on the day it occurred I remembered that fall day in Rome when, with leaves falling outside the window, we dreamed of a new spring. □



Thaddeus Horgan S.A. (back) in discussion with Roland Faley T.O.R. during the Rome Assembly which gave the new Rule to Third Order Regular Franciscans of over 430 congregations worldwide, March 1982.



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.

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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

Evangelical Identity, Chapter 1

Fr. Thaddeus Horgan S.A. & Margaret Carney OSF

The unity of the whole Franciscan movement is expressed in this opening article.



Never before in the Order’s history have members exercised such collective responsibility and global communication . . . Our Amen!

To this Rule binds us together for a new stage of the pilgrimage of penance and peacemaking in our time.

This Rule has emerged as a sacred exchange of desires, commitments, and prophetic convictions.”

Margaret Carney OSF. “Resource Manual for Study of Third Order Rule.” IFC-TOR, Rome. 2013. Introduction, page 3

This **identity chapter** has three short statements interlinked in a tight framework combining *eight centuries* of history with unfolding *international horizons*. It establishes:

1. An ecclesial point of belonging
2. A careful but *comprehensive* description of the *specific identity* of the penitential Franciscan vocation of the Order, and
3. A framework of essential *obediential relationships* that protects the individual from isolation and fragmentation.

The title of the opening chapter — “Rule and Life” — is the medieval way of saying it is a spiritual document containing values, attitudes and principles for a Way of Life. Not just regulations for our lives, but words forming our lives in Gospel living in light of Francis’ life, example and writings. It is our responsibility to give concrete, practical expression in our day.

This First Chapter summarizes the whole Rule and specifically identifies who we are in the Church. The first article says we are religious Franciscans in the Third Order. In this name there is a **whole unwritten history** that goes back to the ancient Order of Penance that predates St. Francis and St. Clare by six hundred years. It includes the history of the Third Order Regular and its sense of rootedness in St. Francis.

The Franciscan Order developed into *three* distinct branches; namely, the first, second, and third Orders. The **First Order** comprises members of several smaller orders who eventually amalgamated in 1897; the Friars Minor (OFM), the Capuchins (OFM^{Cap}), and the Conventuals (OFM^{Conv}). The **Second Order** is comprised of “the Poor Ladies,” founded by St. Clare who live in cloistered communities. The **Third Order** is divided into two sections: *Regular and Secular*. Members who take vows and live in a religious community are known as the **Third Order Regular** (TOR). Members of both sexes who do not take vows and do not live in a religious congregation are known as **Secular Franciscans** (SFO)

The distinctions that exist among the Three Franciscan Orders are not distinctions implying difference in status but differences of emphasis in the *spirituality and mission of each Order*. Together we comprise one worldwide family, inspired by the Gospel spirit of Francis and Clare of Assisi.

The desire for a *new text* that reflected *new research and study* that addressed the need to examine the life and rule of the *First* and *Third* Order Franciscans was arising in multiple places. When certain groups within the assembly — and in the preparatory meetings — asserted a conviction that a *precise Third Order identity and lineage* had to be honored and expressed *specifically* in the text, many were *startled*.

In addition to this difficult path to *shared identity*, there was a problem to

resolve in the use of terms to describe *essential elements* of the charism of the TOR. The International Franciscan Conference (CFI) defined a set of values that clearly emerged from the *first worldwide consultation* on the draft text. Taking all documents into account and having seen the results of the first international consultation on the draft text, the CFI selected

FOUR VALUES that could be said to characterize the TOR spirit: poverty, minority/humility, contemplation and conversion.

The debate, however, continued on. The phraseology of the *First Order Rule* (1223) where the famous *sine proprio* — “without anything of one’s own” — becomes the emblem of *minorite* dedication to poverty understood in a more radical and comprehensive form than that espoused by other religious orders. Conflicts continued within the First Order over the interpretation of Francis’s *intention* in relationship to poverty. This was different for the members of lay Third Order fraternities.

They saw to the proper disposition of personal property by developing a *system of social assistance* through charitable donations or through the insistence upon proper wills being made to insure that a tertiary’s

property would *continue to be used for alleviation of misery*.

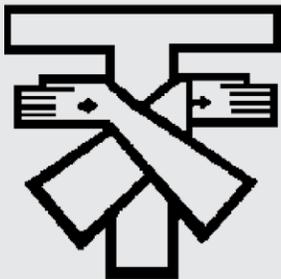
In its final draft this Rule deepened awareness of the *ancient* outlines of the **Third Order** inheritance and brought into focus:

- its inclusion of men and women,
- its infinite variety of historical forms and groups,
- its uneven history of relationships with the First Order.

What finally emerged was an agreement that took the form of the proposal that

the call of penance/metanoia/conversion was indeed, the SINGULAR HALLMARK of the early Franciscan Third Order men and women.

They embraced the calling in the spirit of Francis’ teaching that penance was the very response the presence of Jesus called for in the New Testament kerygma: “Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand” (Mt 3:2). The conversion to the life of grace exhibited by Franciscan penitents was characterized by First and Third Orders: *contemplation, poverty, minority* — and these combined in a way ***that the world never witnessed before***. This proposition make it possible to see the root identification as a life of penance understood as the incarnation in one’s own calling to the poverty, humility and prayerfulness that the early Franciscans embraced and promulgated as a happy way of life.



That singular moment of cooperation replaced months of contentious and fearful disagreements about how

consciousness and a new commitment to this historic opportunity to redefine an entire branch of the Franciscan Order.



Article Two

As a form of Gospel living *metanoia/penitentia* is a style of Gospel life, which has three basic elements according to Francis:

- a. to *acknowledge* the Lord, in the creation, in the word of the scripture, in the manifest goodness of God, and especially in the words, life, deed and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ.
This is what persevering in true faith means.
- b. to *adore* the Lord concretely with one's whole life by living prayerfully in a child-like way with purity of heart. In poverty and in loving obedience which impels the true Gospel person;
- c. to *serve* the Lord in one's neighbor by doing charity for the sake of justice and peace. (Mt. 25:34).

This Article Two summarizes the essence of Gospel living in the penitential tradition.

Article Three

It is well known that Francis placed obedience to Church authority in a very prominent place in the scheme of Franciscan things. This article also calls us to deep fraternity, not only in the larger church or within our local diocesan church, but especially within our communities or fraternities which should be a microcosm of the Church itself. A sign of our fidelity is our obedience to our ministers. But this is not alone.

Of equal importance is our recognition and reverence for each other. How we love one another, even beyond the limits of our Orders and our congregations, will or will not be the witness to the authenticity of our Gospel life.

This article describes the "living in obedience" that characterizes Francis' conception of obedience as ***mutual and humble respect*** for one another leading to profound mutuality as a ground for all decision and exercises of freedom. Consistent attention to living in obedience — of hearing the other's need, advice, desire, direction as God-inspired — is a ***profoundly*** penitential form of life.

This obediential stance gives rise to a desire to see the entire Franciscan family as a blessed web of relationships. This is a call to foster a universal, and ***now international***, solidarity among all branches and entities.

Article three calls us to the realization of new possibilities and makes it a matter of observant obedience to do all in our power to live BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES of our own singular institutions.

While the path to these declaration was painful, and it was not without enormous effort to be attentive to the Spirit at work in contrary opinions and heated debates. That, too is part of our inheritance. We are called to an identity of continual conversion to God and each other. This chapter of the Rule was born in that spirit.

SOURCE: *History of The Third Order Regular: A Source Book*. ED. Margaret Carney OSF, Suzanne Kush CSSF, Jean Francois Godet-Caolgeras Ph.D. Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure, NY. 2008. "Rome International Assembly: Matrix Presentations, Chapter 1. Pp.275-277; *First Generation Commentaries*, "The Rule and Life of The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis." Franciscan Federation, 1982. Pp.340-344.

Also in *Resource Manual for the Study of the Third Order Regular Rule*. ED. Kathleen Moffatt OSF for IFC/TOR, Rome, Italy, 2013. PP.197-201.

And *The CORD 57.4* (2007) "Evangelical Identity, Chapter One" Thaddeus Horgan SA.

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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.

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This TAU Series . . . TOR #8 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org
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With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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The Franciscan Aspect of the Penitential Movement

Raphael Pazzelli TOR

Key aspects from the study

“Outline of the History and Spirituality of the Franciscan Penitential Movement”

published in Rome, 1979 as *Le origini del Terz’Ordine*.

Francis became a penitent immediately after the vision he received before the crucifix of San Damiano. 25

T Francis remained in the Penitential Order for at least two years. He was well aware of the strong desire of the Christian people for a more evangelical life and of the urgent need for spiritual guidance to indicate the way to remain faithful to God and the Church. 26

T When Francis began his penitential preaching with his first companions, the number of penitents (old and new) including married people, suddenly increased. This is known as the penitential movement of the XII Century. People voluntarily embraced the penitential state and all it involved, according to long standing laws and customs of the Church. The Prior to the year 1221 they formed local fraternities.

T The sudden increase of urban penitents, must be attributed to St. Francis of Assisi; he had lived as a *friar of penance* before he founded his Religious Order:

T Francis took an immediate and realistic interest in his penitents. It is also commonly accepted that the *Letter to All the Faithful* (unanimously recognized as written by St. Francis) is not directly intended for all the faithful but for those who accepted to follow him, this is, for the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance*.

Of primary importance for the penitential movement is the document *Recensio Prior* a rough draft of the *Letter to All the Faithful*.

T It is likewise certain that Francis gave a Rule of Life to his penitents, even if we have not been able to identify it.

We know of the directives, ideals and aspirations Francis wanted to give to his penitents from the *Recensio Prior* and from the *Letter to all the Faithful*. The elements which render the penitential movement *Franciscan* are found in these two documents. In addition to Historical elements, we must also consider the spiritual aspect which characterize the penitential movement which followed St. Francis: these and only these elements make it Franciscan.



An analysis of these two documents *Recensio Prior* and *Letter to All the Faithful* reveal that:

For Francis to do penance meant first of all to love God. *Recensio* states: people can reach the happiness for which they yearn only in this love. “All those who love the Lord with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind and with all their strength . . . how happy they are, they do so and persevere in this love so that the Spirit of the Lord will shine upon them and will make God’s abode with them.” He repeats the same concept in the final draft of the Letter. Verse 18 reads: “How happy and blest are those who love the Lord and follow His teaching; love the Lord God with all your heart, with [all your soul your mind.”

Penance for Francis is not a state, it is a journey which leads to God — dynamic in the fullest sense of the word. Humans before God recognize their creature essence — fully dependent on God.

At the same time people have a vocational call to greatness reached by the constant journey towards being like God. “You must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.” (Mt 5:48) This greater likeness can be realized through a continuous *metanoia* or penance in the sense of a constant aspiration and ascent toward God. This will always be an established and essential aspect of *Franciscan Penitents* of the past and present.

For Francis there is one reality: an attitude of absolute humility and recognition of the relationship between God, creator, and the creatures of the world. Only the Gospels, the call to conversion can make this relationship possible. For Francis the Gospels are primarily an interior state, a meaning to give to life, an attitude to take in respect to all life.

Francis centered a good part of *the Letter* on this basic reality — God who loves — repeating the “*fragrant words of my Lord*” and through them revealing the love of God, One and Triune.

The Father is known both through the prophets and the Old Testament, (v4-11) and through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. “*The Father so desired that His blessed and glorious Son, given and born for us, shed his blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the cross . . .* (V11). The Father wants all to be saved through His Son and that His Son be received with a pure heart and a chaste body. (v14)

Jesus took on our humanity and poverty, gave us the Eucharist, offered essential salvific intervention and invited our participation in it. Jesus is Word of God, Brother, true Light,

And true wisdom of the Father. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us *children of God, spouses, brothers and mothers of Our Lord*. The Holy Spirit will come over them and make His dwelling in them and they will be children of the Heavenly Father (v11-53)



T The penitents will respond with love to this love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Their response will be radical, complete and practical, realized in a life of prayer accompanied by the spirit of conversion and by the sacraments. (v 19-35) The first concern of the penitent who feels completely pervaded and supported by God's love is service of God. Brotherly love was extremely difficult in the time of Francis when society was sharply divided by religious and social animosity.

T Another characteristic of the *Penitent* was complete acceptance of Catholicism and absolute trust in the Church. In the time of Francis, this acceptance and trust was contested by the Catharists and Waldensians. Francis' almost imperceptible struggle against these heretics was *simply to insist* on Catholic doctrine. He insisted on the physical reality of the person of Christ to oppose the docetic ideas of the Catharists concerning the Incarnation of the Word. *"This Word of the Father is so worthy that the most high Father of heaven declared it in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary through the holy archangel Gabriel. It is from her womb that He received the flash and fragility of our Humanity."* He rejected the docetic teaching about the Passion of Christ. He simply repeated the words of Luke: *"His sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground," and he insisted that Christ sacrificed His blood on the Cross.*" (v11)

He openly insisted on acceptance of Catholic doctrine on the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Holy Orders questioned by the Catharists and Waldensians.

Francis knew that according to Christ's teachings, the Eucharist is necessary for the spiritual life. He also knew that ordinarily there would be no remission of sins without the Sacrament of Penance. The ministry of the Priesthood is necessary to receive these two Sacraments and no one can be a priest in the full sense of the word without receiving Holy Orders. It is the Sacrament of Orders which confers receiving Holy Orders. It is the Sacrament of Orders which confers the power to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ and to forgive sins. The Catharists and Waldensians refused to admit these ministerial powers in unworthy priests (or those so considered) as if the power of Orders (to consecrate and forgive) came directly from the evangelical *life* the priest lived. Francis openly contested this teaching and remained faithful to the Catholic doctrine. The basis for his position was the **Gospels**, because the Gospels reveal, not only absolute poverty but also the Church with her priests. He encouraged his penitents to respect priests, even unworthy priests, because they have the power to consecrate the Eucharist and forgive sins. (v 22, 34)

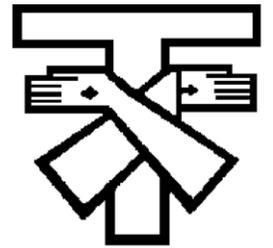
These are the *fundamental ideas*, presented very schematically, which Francis intended to give to his penitents and which render the penitential movement **Franciscan**.



CONCLUSION

I would like to recall the words of Father Esser: "This is the new person, the Franciscan who forgets himself, who completely renounces himself to serve all (creation) in the spirit of the Lord and to do the will of God . . . Rarely has the way of Franciscan life which should unite the friars Minor, the Poor Women and the Brothers and Sister of Penance been presented so clearly, so fully, and so profoundly as it is in the **Letter**. It is presented with amazing naturalness rather than with a spirit of flesh — a human, egotistical or authoritarian spirit. Francis revealed the spirit of the Lord, this is, thinking, willing, living and working according to the Gospels. This way of life is the metanoia, the doing of penance of St. Francis.

We, Regulars and Secular Tertiaries of both male and female congregations, should be proud to have these documents written by St. Francis and intended for us. Naturally they should be part of every Renewal Program and every Formation Program for the new candidates for our beloved **Third Order Regular**.



SOURCE: “The *Franciscan Aspect of the Penitential Movement*” pp.138-142, in *The Origins of The Franciscan Penitential Movement*” pp.129 – 146. *The Assisi Congress on Formation*. 1979. Greensburg, PA



AUTHOR:

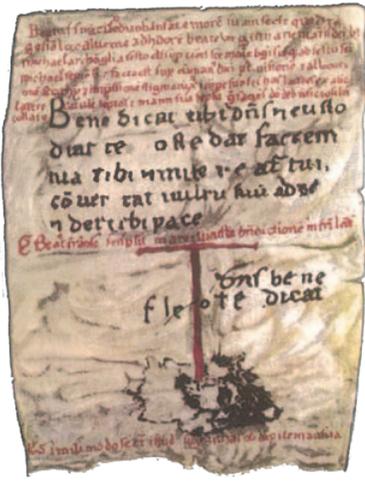
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ART: Lee Kowling, St. Mary of Angels Parish, Singapore. www.franciscans.sg

This TAU Series . . . TOR #9 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org
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With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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.*



TAU Series . . . TOR

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

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

Published by the Franciscan Federation, TOR/USA 1983

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

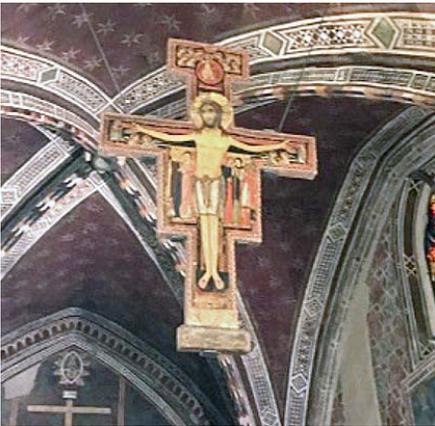
For St. Francis “living in true faith and in penance” (*Earlier Rule, Chapter XXIII: 7*) implies fidelity to the Church as guardian and teacher of the truth of Revelation. This fidelity is to the leaders of the Church (Pope and Bishops) as well as to the leaders of our own congregations or fraternities.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

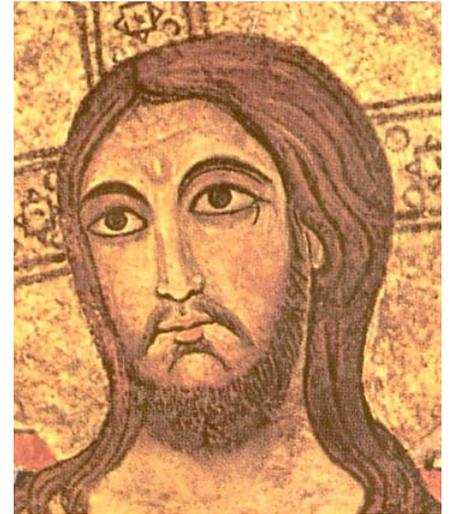
ARTICLE 7

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.

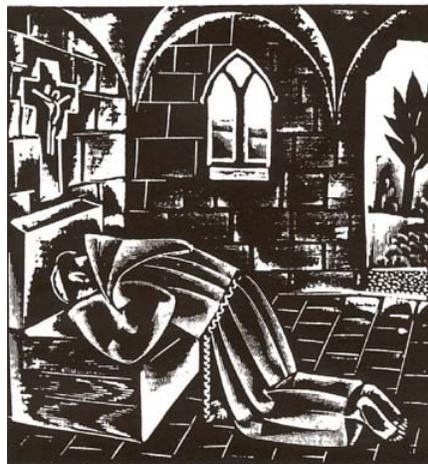
ARTICLE 12

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 communitarian dimension 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

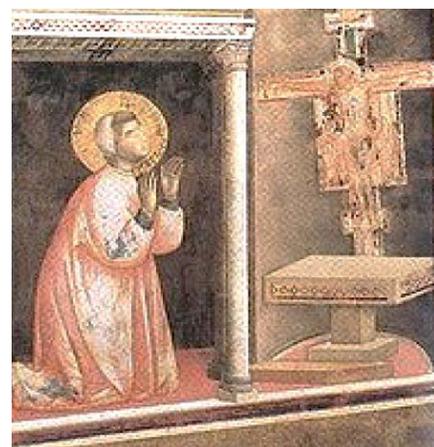
For Francis, *chastity* is intimately related to *poverty* that frees us by protecting the growth of the Word within our lives from the choking thorns and rocks of temporal care. Chastity is not for ourselves alone; rather, it empowers us to witness to God's primacy in practical, visible ways, especially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

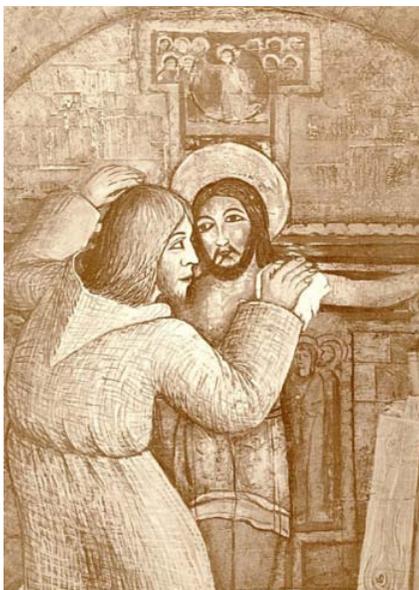
ARTICLE 21

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*.

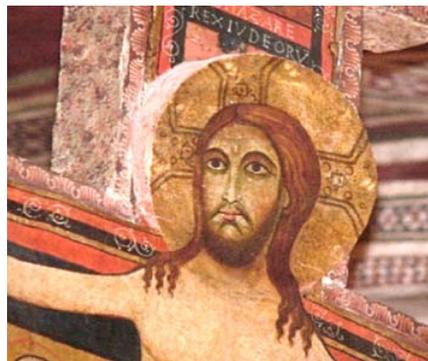
ARTICLE 23

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

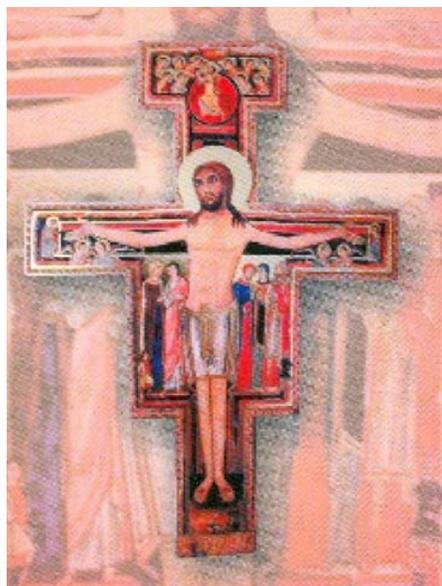
Franciscan obedience is *self-emptying* and therefore intrinsically related to poverty. It is *mutual*, intended for both ministers and members alike. It involves *witness and ministry* for the sake of true justice. We are called to be credible *signs of salvation* as well as instruments of

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.

SOURCE: American — English Commentary of the *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis* @ Franciscan Federation TOR/USA. 1983; also in *Resource Manual for the Study of the Third Order Regular Rule*. Pp. 197-217 ED. Kathleen Moffatt OSF. @ International Franciscan Conference, TOR. Rome, Italy. 2013.

ART ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: **Title** — Kay Frances Berger, Joliet Franciscan (RIP); **Words of St Francis** — Giotto, Upper Church of the Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi; **Chapter 1** — Pedro Subercaseux Errazuriz, 1925, The Illustrated Life of St. Francis; **Chapter 2** — Original San Damiano Crucifix as it now hangs in the Basilica of St. Clare in Assisi, dated around 1100, icon “written” by an unknown Umbrian artist; **Chapter 3** — Close up of the face of Christ on the SDC; **Chapter 4** — Woodcut of di Gastone Vignati, Assisi; **Chapter 5** — Giotto, Upper Church of Basilica of St. Francis, Assisi; **Chapter 6** — St. Clare with SDC, Artist unknown; **Chapter 7** — Francis cleaning the SDC, Norberto Proietti, Assisi; **Chapter 8** — Original SDC; **Chapter 9** — SDC design of OFM Friar, Canterbury; **Blessing** — Sculpture of St. Francis, Our Lady of Angels Convent, Aston, PA; **Margaret Carney’s Reflection** — Contemporary Francis with SDC, Lee Kowling, St. Mary of Angels Parish, Singapore. www.franciscans.sg

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*.

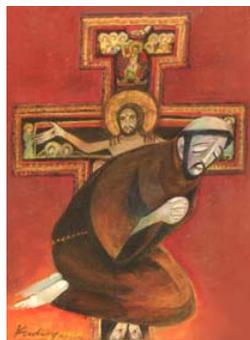
Brothers and sisters from some thirty countries participated in the writing of the Rule. Nearly two hundred superiors general were *personally* present at the final assembly in March, 1981. *Never before in the Order’s history have the members exercised such collective responsibility and global communication.* 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
For additional information, contact Kathleen Moffatt OSF, General Editor, moffatt.kathleen@comcast.net

With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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.



TAU Series . . . TOR

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 Spirituality of Franciscan Sisters

Raphael Pazzelli TOR

The “**Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis**” was approved by Pope John Paul II and intended for the entire movement of the Third Order Regular, male and female. Besides representing and expressing the basic unity of this Franciscan family, the Rule shows its essential elements of spirituality. It follows from this that the spirituality of Franciscan Sisters will be fundamentally that of the Third Order Regular!¹

One can ask: Does there exist a spirituality of the Third Order Regular that is *different* from the other Franciscan Orders? We can give some enlightenment on the question.

Franciscan scholar Lino Temperini TOR stresses that in the sphere of Franciscan spirituality one can identify three main currents that all refer to Saint Francis. Each is distinguished by its own orientation and particular expression. The three currents are practically identified with the three Orders of Saint Francis.

1. Order of Friars Minor, OFM Conventual, OFM Capuchin
2. Order of Poor Clares
3. Third Order Regular and Secular

Each of the three Franciscan Orders has its own set of spiritual elements that characterize each one in the sphere of Franciscan tradition. We call it a spirituality. To be able to identify that spirituality of the Third Order, *it is necessary to be clear about the nature of this order.*

Today, we know with certainty that the **Third Order** is the continuation, with new contributions, of the *penitential movement* which existed *before the time of Saint Francis*; a movement which was known to Saint Francis; a movement which he followed. In 1206, standing before Bishop Guido, Francis renounced his father, Peter Bernadone, changed his clothing to that worn by the penitents and officially entered the penitential state.

I. Penitential Movement

In that penitential movement, there were some constant elements of spirituality which formed its charism. The **Third Order** of Saint Francis thus takes its life from the convergence of two spiritual streams:

- the gospel witness of Francis,
- the penitential movement.

The “penitential movement” had followed Saint Francis in his spirituality and the directives received from him. Later on, *towards the end of the thirteenth century*, this “penitential movement” began to call itself, or was called, “the **Third Order of Saint Francis**.”

“Penance” as it developed in the penitential-Franciscan charism is composed of and explained by the two principal characteristic elements:

- “*continuous conversion*” in the biblical sense of “metanoia,” that is, a redirecting of oneself towards God and the undertaking of a life in which God is the center of activity and aspiration.
- “*active and effective charity*,” on behalf of the brothers and sisters in Christ, an active charity extended to those who have greater need of ‘the works of mercy,’ both spiritual and corporal.

II. Explanation of These Concepts

These two elements are essential to the make-up of this movement:

a) *The Life of Penance*

The term ‘penance’ *does not* have the common meaning here of penance, i.e., actions of external mortification, such as fasting or abstinence from some pleasurable things. *Rather*, the first meaning of penance is in the biblical sense, that is, conversation of the heart, a return to God, a change of outlook, a resolution for the future to follow the will of God. Penance corresponds to ‘metanoia,’ in Latin, ‘conversion.’ Thus the three words: *metanoia*, *penance* and *conversion* have the same meaning and are interchangeable.

According to scholar Lino Temperini, Franciscan penance indicates above all an *interior attitude* that turns the primary interest of the soul and the impulse of the heart incessantly toward God. Penance expresses a type of relationship with the Lord, a way of seeing the world as a turning toward God-Love.

For the sisters and brothers of the **Third Order of Saint Francis** the *charism of penance* is a particular way of

freeing oneself toward Love.

LOVE must be responded to! This is the uncomplicated substance of Franciscan spirituality. *This is why Francis preached penance.*

Lino Temperini TOR.
The Assisi Congress on Formation, 1977.

These are spiritual moments of a more intense conversion to God by means of conformity to Christ who is the only way to draw near to the Father. (see John 14:6.)

Penance confers a special dynamism to the development of the spirit. It shapes and draws to itself the means of Christian perfection, nourishing a continuous turning towards God who is seen as love and sought out as love.

This profound orientation, that arises from a definite decision to seek God, guarantees the 'Primacy of the Spirit,' which constantly keeps awake enthusiasm, nourishes commitment and influences all the moments of existence that involve the body, the psyche, the mind, and the will. Consequently, the penitential life does not originate in the fear of divine punishment but by its attraction towards God as the highest Good and the mystery of love.



Called for centuries “the Franciscan Order of Penance,” today’s penitents have their own style of life, their own way of evaluating things, and of defining their human life. They have their own view of earthly things which they look upon with admiration and detachment; they are optimistic and happy in the Lord, generously *witnessing* to the love that God has for His creatures.

b) *The Life of Active Charity*

There is enough evidence to show that **charity and availability to the brothers and sisters** are natural consequences of an interior conversion deeply lived. A life of active charity is the life of penance achieved. Scripture clearly says: “Whoever does not love the brother or sister whom they can see, cannot love the God whom they have not seen.”

(1 John 4:20.):

T “... and may we love our neighbor as ourselves by drawing them all to Your love with our whole strength, by rejoicing in the good of others as in our own, by suffering with others at their misfortunes, and by giving offense to no one.

St. Francis' Prayer Inspired by the Our Father, 5

In the spirit of Saint Francis, the brothers and sisters of penance are dedicated to the poor, the sick, the elderly, the orphans, the handicapped, the marginated, the illiterate and the afflicted. Thus those suffering in body or spirit have always been the ones beloved by the Friars and Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis. Together with the penitential spirituality, charitable service is to be considered a characteristic of the life of the Tertiary Regulars. The concrete sign of conversion for Saint Francis was

his embrace of the leper, his attention to the poor, the humble, the suffering, to those without God, and to those thirsting for truth and peace.

III. The Voice of History

a) *Life of Penance*

Before the fourth century in the East there were the forerunners of that way of life which would later be called the penitential movement. They would be called “*abrenuntiantes*” or those who renounce the “world.” In the West, these people were called “*conversi*”, those who had decided upon a conversion, a breaking with the kind of life experienced in the past, called the “world,” and the making of a commitment, often public, to live “penance,” a new kind of life in which God is the center of one’s existence. The very concept of “conversion” tells us that the purpose of such a decision was to make God the reference point and the aim of one’s own life.

Conversion was considered a gift from God and also a response on the part of a human being in the presence of divine initiative. This idea was clearly present as early as Dionysius of Alexandria (+264 AD) and again in a spiritual treatise of the twelfth century in the *Book of Penance* by the Anonymous Benedictine of the Twelfth Century.

In the seventh century, Saint Isidore of Seville, speaking of penance and the meaning of “conversion of heart,” emphasized the interior dimension which should make penance a Christian “way of life,” not only an act or rite *but* a constant disposition of the religious spirit . . . mostly an interior consecration to a new style of life. This element of deep interiority was ‘rediscovered,’ lived and taught by Saint Francis insistently and in great detail to his penitents.

The Rules of 1289 and 1521

present the penitential spirituality more in terms of deeds, or actions to perform (fasting, alms, vigils);

The Rule of 1927

places greater stress on *charity*. Care of the sick, even mitigating the cloister observance, is a very important witness in this life.

T *Let us always make a home and a dwelling place there for Him who is the Lord God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit . . . Wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of the day, every day and continually, let all of us truly and humbly believe, hold in our heart and love, honor, adore and serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the Most High.*

St. Francis' *Earlier Rule* (1221) 22:27; 23:11

b) *The Works of Mercy or Active Charity*

The other essential element for the charism of penance, besides conversion, is active charity. It grew slowly through the centuries in a systematic way and follows the development of society in its practical manifestations. There are always those who suffer or have need of assistance: it is indeed to these practical needs of humankind that the penitential movement has always sought to bring comfort and help by following the teachings of the great masters of the ages.

The *most complete text concerning penitential teaching* which has come down to us is from the **tenth century**. RATHERIUS lived from 887-974. A monk of the Abby of Lobbes, he was elected Bishop of Verona in **926**. It will be helpful to remember his words written a thousand years ago: "Are you a penitent? Remember above all the rule of penance given by the Baptizer of the Lord; 'Produce fruits worthy of penance. The penitents must put this into practice with generosity if they desire to obtain the mercy of the Lord.'" Here he gives the spiritual motive for each of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy to which penitents should dedicate themselves. Thus, practically for RATHERIUS, "to do penance" means "to perform worthy fruits of penance," that is, perform the works of charity for one's neighbor.

T *All those who love the Lord with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, with their whole strength and love their neighbor as themselves, who hate their bodies with their vices and sins, who receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and who produce worthy fruits of penance. O how happy and blessed are these men and women while they do such things and persevere in doing them.*

St Francis' *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, 1-5 (1209-1215)

But, the way of penance is a difficult thing. Invoke then divine help every day or rather every moment; whether in silence or in whatever thing you do, ask for it seriously of the Lord: O God, create in me a pure heart.

RATHERIUS of Verona bears witness that the two elements of the penitential life, perseverance in the way of penance or continuous conversation and the works of active charity were already considered essential in his day.

IV. The Two Elements in the Rule

These two elements, the life of penance and the works of active charity, will form the cornerstone of the life and spirituality of the penitents and the spirituality of those penitents who followed Francis of Assisi. The **first** "Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance," called the *Memoriale propositi*, 1221 exhorts the penitents to persevere in their penance and to put into practice the works of mercy."

This **same admonition** is repeated in the Rule of Nicholas IV in **1289**. This text of the Rule of Nicholas IV remained legally in force also for those women



associations of Franciscan inspiration whose sisters *began to live community life* and more correctly the religious life, at least until **1521** when Pope Leo X desired to give these new entities their own Rule, one more suitable for **the religious life**. He states that these two elements,

- a) continuous penance and
- b) mercy or active charity, represent and summarize, the whole specific purpose of the Order of Penitents, **establishing its reason for existence in the ecclesial community**.

These elements (on-going conversion and mercy or active charity) established the **charism of the Third Order** and, having remained intact through the centuries, have been *automatically* inserted into the many congregations of Franciscan sisters which have arisen from the time of the fifteenth century to the present.

The **new Rule of 1982** includes the same realities: "Led by the Lord, let them begin a life of penance." (Art. 6); "They wish to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, poverty and humility." (Art. 2); "The brothers and sisters are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring" (Art. 30).

V. Corollary: *How Penance Became the Characteristic of the "Brothers and Sisters of the Penance"*

To look into the historical question of how, when and why penance-conversion became the principle characteristic of the Third Order of Saint Francis, we begin with the four principal elements which all agree go back to the constitutive nucleus of Franciscanism: minority, poverty, penance-conversion and prayer-contemplation. We consider two.

Minority: The beginnings of Francis' conversion were penitential. In the primitive preaching before going to Rome, to those who asked them "where do you come from?" they "confessed with simplicity that they were penitents from Assisi." (3 Com 37) Soon (we don't know exactly when) they began to call themselves "Friars Minor." James de Vitry, in his letter from Genova in October 1216, clearly states that the *Pauperes Minores* were commonly called *Frați minori* and the followers of Saint Clare the *Sorelle minore*.²²

From Celano's remark in the *Vita prima*, (First Life) it seems that Francis was struck by the expression "they are to be minors" as soon as it was suggested and wanted it to become the actual name of his fraternity.³ Even without any association with the *minori* of the city, Francis knew the *maggiori* and the *minori* competed for control with one another. The novelty was quite evident: even those who were "maggiori" in the world voluntarily became "minori" like Francis, wanting to compete with no one. "Minority" will also be the characteristic of the spirituality of the Friars Minor.

Poverty: Another characteristic of the new fraternity immediately developed — poverty — chosen for the love of God and "to follow in the footsteps of His Son."

T *Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God, give us the grace to do for you alone what we know you want us to do and always to desire what pleases you. Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit, may we be able to follow in the footprints of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.*

St., Francis' *A Letter to the Entire Order*, 50-51

From the moment he heard the gospel passage on the "mission of the apostles" which practically marked the beginning of the fraternity, Francis understood that the *vita evangelica* included a life of poverty. Although Francis practiced poverty since the first days of his conversion (the decision made at San Damiano and his renunciation of his wealth before Bishop Guido,) now poverty became an essential element of his evangelical vocation.⁴ The gospel passage showed Francis *how* and *why* he should practice poverty from then on. Thus, heeding the advice of Francis, Bernard of Quintaville, Francis' first companion, "hastened to sell all his goods and gave the money to the poor . . . carrying out the counsel of the holy gospel: If you will be perfect, go, sell what you have and give it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." Then follows the important remark that "his conversion to God was a model to others: they should sell their patrimony and distribute the money to the poor." Poverty was, from that time on, considered as a fundamental characteristic of the spirituality of the Order of Friars Minor.

These two elements — **minority and sublime poverty** — also became the two basic points for the spirituality of the Second order, the Poor Clares. Due to *ecclesiastical disciplines* in force at that time,

the order was also characterized by the contemplative life.

Consequently, it was "penance" (understood as conversion of heart and active charity) that remained the primary characteristic of only the Third Order of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance. For centuries these characteristics and particular traits of the three Franciscan Orders *have been practically forgotten*. In our own time, they have *gradually* been rediscovered, explained again and placed in proper perspective so that there might be fuller understanding of Franciscan spirituality; as it is fitting and proper that each order have its own features well defined.

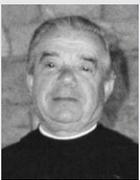
END NOTES

¹ We say fundamentally because a Rule by its nature, does not have the obligation of containing all the spirituality of a religious order which follows the Rule. The spirituality will instead be completely expressed in the Constitutions which are proper to each order or religious congregation.

² See Cf. Lemmens, *Testimonia minora*, pp. 17; OMNIBUS, p. 1605.

³ "For he wrote in the rule, 'and let them be lesser brothers,' and when these words were spoken, indeed, in that same hour, he said; 'I wish that this fraternity should be called the order of Friars Minor.'" *1 Cel.*, 38.

⁴ D.V. Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection, an historical examination of the concept in the early Franciscan sources*. The Franciscan Institute, St. Bonaventure University, NY, 1977, p. 100.

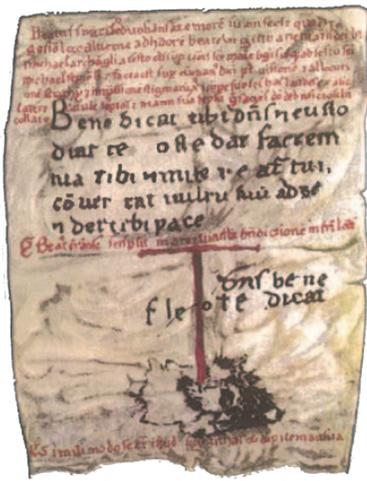


SOURCE: *The Franciscan Sisters*. "The Spirituality of Franciscan Sisters" Chapter XIII, pp.200-215, Raffaele Pazzelli T.O.R., Franciscan University Press, Steubenville, OH 43952. **1993.**

AUTHOR: **Raffaele Pazzelli T.O.R.** — born in San Ginesio, Italy, spent his life as a TOR Friar/Scholar teaching in Rome, India and the USA. Serving as a key consultant to the "Rule Project," Raffaele's scholarship and enthusiasm for the best of T.O.R. heritage was unequalled. His courses and books *St. Francis and the Third Order* and *History of the Third Order Regular* are foundational to the best understanding of the T.O.R. heritage. From 1977 to 1989, he served as Definitor General of the Order, Director of the review *Analecta Tertii Ordinis* as well as the *International Historical Commission* of the T.O.R.

PREPARED BY: **Marian Leaf**, *Sister of St. Francis of Philadelphia*, Aston, PA. With an MSW from Marywood University, Scranton, PA, Marian has served for 12 years in Zambia, Africa and presently ministers as a Parish Facilitator to five Parishes in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Region of the Fairbanks Diocese in northern Alaska. These parishes are accessible by small plane and receive a visiting priest every 2-3 months. Marian's missionary vocation had brought great blessing.

ART: Bardi Dossal, Santa Croce, Florence, 1245



The **TAU**

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

Franciscan Evangelical Life and the Third Order Regular Charism

Clare Andrew D’Auria OSF

INTRODUCTION

In 1983, the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (SCRIS) published the document, “Essential Elements in the Church’s Teaching on Religious Life as Applied to Institutes Dedicated to Works of the Apostolate.” This document was designed to aid the bishops of the United States in helping religious congregations whose “Institutes are engaged in apostolic works to live their ecclesial vocation to the full” (Letter of Pope John Paul II to the Bishops of the United States, 3 April 1983).

Since its publication, this document, addressing the two major forms of institutes of consecrated life — *vita monastica*, monastic life, and *vita apostolica*, apostolic life — has elicited numerous responses and has initiated much dialogue, especially among Franciscan scholars.¹ Much of this discussion centers around the distinction, unaddressed in the document, which places a different emphasis on the manner in which these institutes live out the common life. The Church, in fact, has always acknowledged the vital importance of each congregation understanding its founding charism and encouraged its faithful observance in the life of the institute (Canons 577, 578, 598:1, 673).

It is in this spirit, then, that we speak of three types of religious communities with the different accents and possibilities of the common life:

- **The Monastic Society** centered on contemplation and praise of God;
- **The Evangelical Fraternity** centered on the spirit of simplicity, of benevolence and on a radical witness to Christ and His Gospel;
- **The Apostolic Congregation** centered on the concrete mission of service to the world (Concilium 16:5).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the concept of evangelical fraternity as Francis of Assisi understood it and to highlight its particular nuances as lived out in the Third Order Regular tradition.²



TOWARD A DEFINITION OF EVANGELICAL LIFE

Shortly before his death in October, 1226, Francis dictated his Testament. In this document, Francis reflects for himself and for his followers what it means to live the *vita evangelica*, the Gospel life. Appropriately, he begins by remembering his most profound initial conversion experience, that of embracing the leper:

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them (Test 1-2).

Evangelical life begins in an experience of penance-conversion-metanoia: that profound, intuitive, and concrete experience of the

goodness of God that impels one “in sin” (Test 1) to turn toward him in a loving faith response to the central Gospel call to “Reform your lives and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15).

Evangelical life is the ongoing process of surrendering to being “led by the Lord” (Test 2) and, in a spirit of constant and overflowing gratitude, finds its expression in the showing of mercy to all, in the living out of the Shema (Dt 6:4-5; Mt 22:37) in loving God and neighbor.³

Thaddeus Horgan says that “For Francis there is only one way to live evangelical conversion, and that is by living the Gospel literally.”⁴ Francis uses two vivid expressions to explain the dynamic way of life which he and his brothers were to lead at the inspiration of the Lord:

1. to follow in the footsteps of Christ (RegNB I:1; XXII:2);
2. to live according to the form of the holy Gospel (RegNB XXII:41).⁵ This is the essence of evangelical life and it is integrally bound up in the ongoing experience of conversion.

It is important to examine these two expressions more closely because “each term expresses an important aspect of God’s personal call to Francis and the saint’s loving response.”⁶

FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTPRINTS OF THE LORD

Francis follows Christ because he realizes that Christ is the only way to the Father (Jn 1:6; Adm 1:1): that in the mystery of God’s plan brought to completion in the fullness of time — all creation would be drawn into unity in him (cf. Eph 1:10). The creation of the world and its re-creation begins and ends in Christ. Francis understands

that the most perfect expression of the Father’s goodness is the Incarnation of his Son, Jesus Christ, who is for Francis “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creatures so that primacy may be his in everything*” (Col 1:15 ff).

In Chapter 23 of the Rule of 1221, Francis praises the Father in the profound prayer of one who has himself become a prayer (2Cel 95): “We thank you for Yourself” (RegNB XXIII:1). Throughout this almost mystical hymn on the generosity of God, Francis celebrates Paul’s own message to the Colossians: *all is created through Christ and for Christ — he who “is before all else that is. In him everything continues in being”* (Col 1:17). Jesus Christ “*lies at the center of all life and of all activity that pulses and functions in the universe.*”⁷

Christ, then, becomes for Francis the fullest expression of the Father’s goodness and love. Because all creation comes into being in and



through Christ, it is sacred for Francis and worthy of reverence (*Canticle*). This is especially true of the human person created and formed in the image of the Son (Adm 5:1).

All this, intuited by Francis through his own spirit-life, is later formulated by **John Duns Scotus** (d. 1308) and expressed as the doctrine of the absolute primacy of Christ.⁸ It is in, with and through this Jesus, firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15), that everything gives glory to the Father. Francis' own reverence and joy in the midst of all created reality explains his remarkable grasp of this truth. Francis recognizes the sacred presence within each creature, respects its uniqueness, and appreciates the enormous diversity of all of created reality. He is incapable of appropriating anything as his own all is seen as gift from the all-good God. He sees *each* creature and *all* of them together as messengers of God through their very existence and can, therefore, welcome all as brother and sister.⁹

Through this awareness of God's goodness in Christ and in all of creation, Francis becomes a person of unceasing prayer (2Cel 165; LM 9:1). His faith reveals the Christ who lives in him, prays in him, and leads him to put aside all care and attachment so that the Spirit can make within his heart a dwelling place (II EpFid 48; RegNB XXII:27).

This profound realization makes of him a living prayer, and thus he encourages his followers:

Let all of us wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of day, every day and continuously . . . love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the most high and supreme eternal God (RegNB XXIII:11).

For Francis, then, there is no dichotomy, but rather a genuine synthesis between action and contemplation. For, those of us who live the evangelical life, live constantly in the presence of God — whether in

solitude or with others. We see and reverence God through the Christ in his word, in others, in creation, and in our own hearts. Prayer becomes adoration.¹⁰



LIFE ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

Following in the footprints of the Lord (EpOrd 51) means for Francis that he responds completely to the Father's love in the manner of Jesus Christ. This response of faith and repentance describes his total embrace of "*life according to the form of the holy Gospel*" (Test 14; RegNB XXII:41).¹¹

This way of life is not focused on the common life of Ac 4:32, as in the monastic societies of his times; nor is it centered solely on the missionary discourse of Mt 10:5-14, as in the apostolic communities.¹² The Lord reveals to Francis that he is to live the whole Gospel, simply and plainly

(LM 3:8). For him such an observance of the Gospel centers on the great commandment of love of God and neighbor (Mt 22:37, 39; I EpFid I:1; II EpFid 81).

Evangelical life is not established around a common place as are monastic societies, nor around a common task as are apostolic congregations. It is rather formed around a common heart.

Being grasped by the person of the Gospel whose portrait is drawn in the Beatitudes, Francis can do no less than follow him with all his power and strength, with every effort, wish and desire (RegNB XXIII:8). St. Bonaventure tells us, "He received (*concepit*) the spirit of the true Gospel, in order to give birth to it" (LM 3:1).

OBEDIENCE

For Francis, giving birth means completely surrendering to the will of the Father as he allows himself to be led by the Spirit in a life of continuous conversion (Mt 1:15). Jesus Christ's self-emptying modeled the one and only response needed by Francis in discerning his way to the Father. It is the foundation of all he ever teaches in the shaping and preserving of his brotherhood.¹³

Essential to this obedience in its unique form is Francis' call to himself and his followers to "*promise obedience to one another*" (RegNB V:14). Beyond this original insight into Gospel life, Francis prescribes the traditional understanding of obedience understood by those of his times. Even in this directive, however, it is necessary to understand that, for Francis, obedience deals not with law but with revelation.¹⁴ Its goal is not common life, but the facilitating of the Gospel life of love. Obedience helps us to overcome selfishness, to free our hearts from all that is not of God so that the Spirit of God might dwell

within, be inspiration, and act in us in absolute freedom (SalVirt 14-18).¹⁵

In Francis' view, then, "obedience begins before authority enters."¹⁶ However, for us to live the "*true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (RegNB V:14), Francis believes that what is inspired by the Spirit must be confirmed by the Church (RegB I:12). To act without confirmation is to separate ourselves from the Church and from the community/fraternity and to reappropriate our will. This confirmation from the Church is mediated for Francis through the minister (RegB I:8; RegNB VI:6). In evangelical life, the minister wields no power (II EpFid 42). According to **Wayne Hellmann**, "*The ministers do*



not make obedience, but rather they serve and assist the friars in their obedience to the Spirit of the Lord."¹⁷ Such obedience presupposes that both the minister and the members are free of selfishness and reverence the presence and revelation of the Spirit in one another. Then there can be true obedience.

Such relational obedience exists not only between ministers and members however. Since the Spirit of God dwells in each one, the members obey one another and not just the minister (RegB VI:8). It is the Spirit that unites us in mutual charity (RegNB V:14). For this reason, obedience becomes the *structure* of evangelical life and Francis can speak of the novices as being received into the "*realm of obedience*" (RegNB II:9; RegB II:11). Evangelical life is not established around a common place as are monastic societies, nor around a common task as are apostolic congregations. It is rather formed around a common heart: "the firm will to accept one another in our differences, to respect one another and to walk together" united in love.¹⁸

From this perspective, *chapters* become essential as the means by which we come together to build up one another in mutual love and encourage one another to live the Gospel and the Rule which each of us has promised the Lord (Test 40). As **Michael Crosby**, says, "*The core of Francis' theology of obedience . . . is the bond of mutual fraternal love, which is the means of achieving the highest Christian charity.*"¹⁹

FRATERNITY

It is this bond of mutual love that forms the center of Franciscan evangelical life. To live the whole Gospel and to follow in the footprints of the Lord Jesus Christ means, at its deepest level, to build up the kingdom by living in loving relationships (RegNB 11:10-13). Francis

uses the word "*fraternity*" to identify this relationship that each of us has with Jesus Christ our brother.²⁰ From the outset, then, it is important that we understand the significance of this term and why Francis uses it.

The truth of our love is realized first in our life with one another, a life of essential equality. **Thaddee Matura** emphasizes that "*the strongest and most demanding love is that which is required of me with regard to those to whom I have committed my life.*"²¹ Such love presupposes an essential poverty, that active self-emptying love that frees our hearts from self-interest: that ongoing conversion by which we live without appropriating anything to ourselves. This kind of poverty facilitates the building up of the bonds of community/fraternity (RegNB VI:10). Its absence undermines and breaks the genuine bond. **Eloi Leclerc** explains how important this kind of poverty is for Francis:

*Francis rightly saw that at the base of the rupture between persons there is always a shrinking back on oneself, a secret desire for appropriation that makes us see everything in terms of ourselves: our personality, our ideas, our project, or our interests When the secret desire for appropriation is thwarted, agitation, irritation, anger, and rupture are the result.*²²

Because Francis recognizes that such "ruptures" will occur despite the best of intentions, reconciliation becomes essential to living in community/fraternity (EpMin 9-12). Realizing that Christ redeemed each of us to reconcile us with the Father by drawing all together in unity in himself, we are ready to forgive one another: to ask for forgiveness and to receive forgiveness. We make



peace with one another in a spirit of kindness and humility. Since this relationship is the “circumstance in which we realize our living of conversion, or Gospel life, together,”²³ it is here especially that each of us begins to work toward reconciliation and unity in mutual love.

As **Matura** summarizes,

*“This profound acceptance of the other without preconditions, realistic and merciful, and exercised in fraternal equality, is together with our love of God the central value of our Franciscan existence.”*²⁴

When we live in loving relationships the Kingdom of God is realized. It is to this that we witness. It is in this that we render our most important service to the Church and to the world.

WORKS OF MERCY

In his Sermon on the Mount, especially in the Beatitudes, Christ simultaneously draws a portrait of himself and of the kingdom which he inaugurates.²⁵

Francis grasps the importance of living the Beatitudes, the values of Jesus Christ. He understands that

attitude is all: we must become like a little child — lesser, *minor to enter the kingdom. We identify with and become brother/sister* to the least (Mt 25:40) because these are the ones with whom Christ identified and for whom he is brother (RegNB 9:2; ICel 76; 2Cel 84-85). **Leclerc** expands on this point:

*Living the Gospel means accepting to live with one’s brothers and sisters, with all of them; not only with the holy and healthy ones, but also with the lame, the crippled, the mediocre and the sinful. In the midst of all such people it means bearing witness to God’s infinite patience, his inexhaustible forgiveness, his constantly renewed grace for that is what God’s heart is like. When this kind of witness is given, then, and at that very point the Kingdom of God comes. The light of the Gospel begins to shine in a murky world.*²⁶

Assimilating the values of Jesus as outlined in the Beatitudes means, for Francis, ongoing conversion, that is, changing his own attitudes and concretizing these changed attitudes in deeds, in *“fruits worthy of repentance”* (I EpFid I:3; II EpFid 25). For Francis, however, the task in itself is unimportant. Evangelical life, therefore, has historically, in response to human need, addressed itself to a diversity of ministries. This is especially true of TOR congregations.²⁷ What is paramount for Francis is the manner in which the deeds of mercy are accomplished: in a spirit of minority (RegNB VII:15-16). The lesser brothers and sisters, aware of their own need for God, minister to the least of God’s people, those identified in the judgment

scene presented in *Matthew 25*. This ministry is characterized by mutuality and interdependence: we are sent to give and to receive.

Building this kind of kingdom where needs are filled and all live in essential equality as brother and sister is not an option for Francis but a Gospel imperative.²⁸ The sign that such a kingdom has begun is the presence of a “peace which the world cannot give” (Jn 14:27). When we profess evangelical life, we are committed to this kind of peacemaking, to building this kind of new world order that truly reflects God’s goodness in Christ through whom all things were made (L3S 58).

COSMIC FRATERNITY

This movement toward unity in the Kingdom of Christ our brother, is a journey not restricted to humankind alone. All creation moves toward fulfillment and, to all of creation, Jesus Christ is also brother. It is through, in, and for Christ that the world was created and so it bears his footprints, an understanding that Francis intuitively and Bonaventure theologizes in his *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*. Francis experiences God’s transcendent goodness in the gifts of creation (2Cel 165; LM 9:1).

Joseph Chinnici writes that, from the perspective of evangelical spirituality, *“it is clear that the world, at the root of its existence is good; it is made through Christ and bears the marks of its Creator.”*²⁹ **Thaddeus Horgan** adds that, in such a world



view, “There is nothing that is not holy, nothing that is not meant to be united and reconciled. The cosmic Christ is brother to everything.”³⁰ **Leclerc** emphasizes that Francis is “*not content only with praising God for his creatures, he fraternizes with them all. And this is new.*”³¹ They are brothers and sisters to him and deserve his reverence because they share with him the same good and loving Father and the same redeeming brother, Jesus Christ.

Such a view does not imply that Francis fails to recognize the sin and darkness in the world. But “sin is related to what people do in the world and to it. Sin for Francis is, above all, appropriation, taking to oneself what belongs to God.”³² In fact, Francis equates conversion with leaving the world (Test 1-4), an image which means that, after his conversion, “he lives within the reality of God’s gift; he sees the intrinsic structure and reality of the world, nature, people and himself to *be gift*. His task and that of his followers is *to receive, give thanks, bear witness* to this reality.”³³ There



is no place for the domination or exploitation of nature; we are stewards of the gifts of creation. Sharing, not consuming, is the mode of being in the world. Interdependence is the way to witness fraternity. Those who participate in political, economic, or social structures that foster appropriation and thus rupture cosmic fraternity need conversion and reconciliation because, as **Leclerc** notes, “*To refuse fraternity with nature*

is also, to be sure, to render oneself incapable of fraternity between all persons.”³⁴

In our working to create genuine relationships with one another and with all of creation, the Kingdom of God, already begun by Christ, will be built up toward completion; the world will be renewed in the life of the Gospel, in the life of ongoing conversion — in peace, in justice, and in love.

END NOTES

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- ⁴ Thaddeus Horgan, S.A., "Life According to the Holy Gospel," in *The Cord* 32 (1982): 273.
- ⁵ Duane Lapsanski, *Evangelical Perfection: On the Historical Examination of the Concept in the Early Franciscan Sources* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute, 1977): 66.
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- ¹¹ Helpful references on this theme from the *Omnibus of the Sources: 1Cel* 22, 30, 32, 84, 209, 216, 2Cel 62, 105, 115, 216; *L3S* 25, 29; *II EpFid* 11-13; *OffPass* 7.8; 15.13; *EpOrd* 51-51; *EpLeo* 3.
- ¹² Chinnici, 6-7.
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- ¹⁷ Hellmann, "Obedience," 346.
- ¹⁸ Thaddeus Matura, O.F.M., "Fraternity: Human Reality and Gospel Sign," in *The Cord* 30 (1980): 116.
- ¹⁹ Michael Crosby, O.F.M. Cap., "Obedience: The Fraternal Bond of Charity," in *The Cord* 31 (1981): 294.
- ²⁰ Vorreaux, 69-72.
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- ²³ Horgan, "Life," 276.
- ²⁴ Matura, "Fraternity," 115.
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- ²⁶ Eloi Leclerc, O.F.M., *Francis of Assisi: Return to the Gospel* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1983): 116.
- ²⁷ Carney, 72.
- ²⁸ Thaddeus Horgan, S.A., "Prophetically Living Franciscan Penance" in *The Cord* 27 (1977): 89.
- ²⁹ Joseph Chinnici, 16.
- ³⁰ *TOR Rule Commentary*.
- ³¹ Leclerc, *The Song*, 16.
- ³² Chinnici, 18.
- ³³ Chinnici, 18.
- ³⁴ Leclerc, *The Song*, 19.

SOURCE: *The CORD* 44, No.11 (November 1994): 307-316.



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ART: Page 5, *Legenda Maior di S.Bonaventura*: miniature dal codice pergameneo del 1457, Roma Museo Francese, inv.nr 1266. Page 6, Francis takes Rule to Pope Innocent III, Bardi Dossal, Santa Croce Church, Florence, Italy.

This TAU Series . . . TOR #13 can be downloaded for free from The International Franciscan Conference, TOR Rome, Italy, www.ifc-tor.org For additional information, contact Kathleen Moffatt OSF, General Editor, moffatt.kathleen@comcast.net

With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA



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.



TAU Series . . . TOR

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, | THE INITIATIVE OF GOD
“The Lord led me . . .” |
| Second, | A CHANGE OF OUTWARD BEHAVIOR
“It seemed exceedingly bitter to me to see lepers . . .” |
| Third, | AN INTERIOR TRANSFORMATION
“That which had seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness”
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 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.

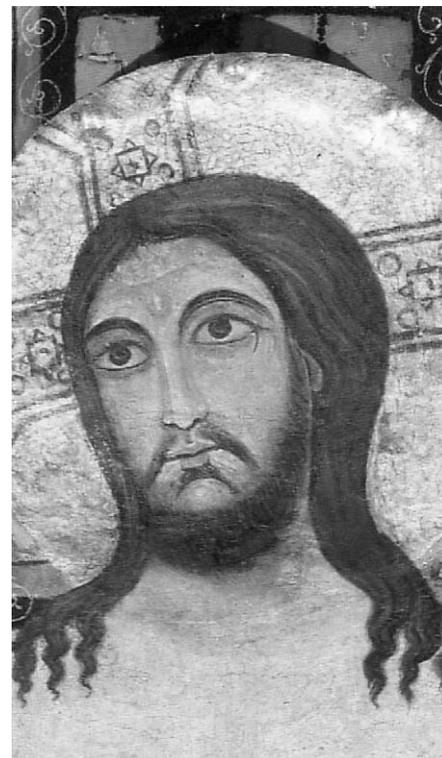
*"To know God,
to adore God,
to serve God in true
conversion of heart."*

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.

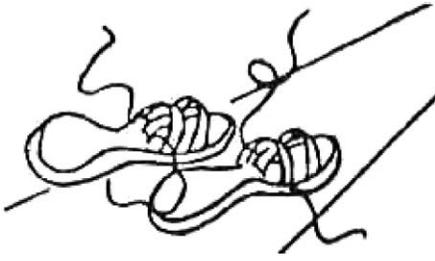
The Prologue focuses on the charism of **conversion** or **metanoia**. *Article two* of the TOR Rule explicitly spells out the practical meaning of continuous conversion which is the very center of the gospel message. This is done in the words of Francis (RNB 23:4). Three expressions summarize the whole 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.

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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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With gratitude to Roseanne Bittner, Administrative Assistant, Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia, PA