

FRATERNITY FOR FRANCISCANS

Have on hand: O.F.S. Rule, General Constitutions and Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership

A.) Looking at our Rule: We see in both our *Rule* and *General Constitutions* a wealth of reminders of what we professed as Secular Franciscans. The Fraternity is always an essential part of the Franciscan story. In the *Prologue* to the *Rule*, when St. Francis wrote to all “the Brothers and Sisters of Penance,” notice his use of “we” and “all.” While today’s review is not based on quotes from St. Francis, it does give us approved clues to 21st century O.F.S. life.

In Article #22 of the *Rule*, we read: “The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.” Article #23 continues: “The entire community is engaged in this process of growth by its own manner of living.” [Underline added for emphasis.]

Q1. How well have I or our Fraternity been fulfilling these goals explained in the *Rule*, Article #22?

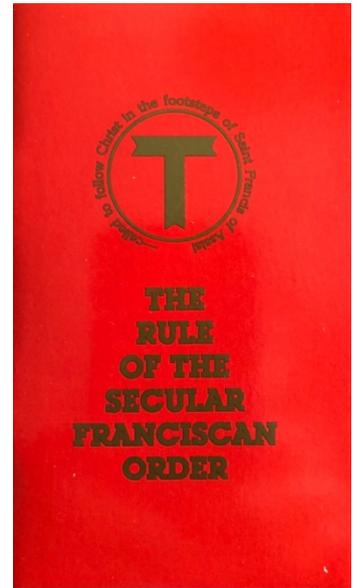
B.) Fraternity – Essential Elements: There are many ways to approach the topic of Fraternity. Some of the essential elements are: **sharing, caring, and family spirit.**

Q2. In what ways does a Fraternity show **SHARING** on the part of the members? How is this manifested in daily life?

Q3. In what ways does a Fraternity show **CARING** on the part of the members? How is this manifested in daily life?

Q4. In what ways does a Fraternity show **FAMILY SPIRIT** on the part of the members? How is this manifested on an ongoing basis?

C.) Reviewing our Rule: (Article #1) “The Franciscan family ... [is] in life-giving union with each other ... [and] their common Seraphic Father...” (Article #2) “In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state.” (Article #5) “Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity.” (Article #8) “Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.” (Article #13) “A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly ...” (Article #15) “Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice ...” (Article #19) “Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue ...” (Article #20) “The Secular Franciscan Order is divided into fraternities of various levels – local, regional, national, and international. Each one has its own moral personality in the Church. These various fraternities are coordinated and united according to the norm of this Rule and of the Constitutions.” (Article #23) “Members who find themselves in particular difficulties should discuss their problems with the council in fraternal dialogue.” [Underline added for emphasis.]



Q5. Do our monthly meetings/gatherings become a means of spiritual nourishment in the Franciscan (O.F.S.) way? Why or why not? What needs to be added to our meetings/gatherings, if anything?

Q6. What are the four recommended elements of a regular monthly meeting/gathering?
(See *Handbook for Secular Franciscan Servant Leadership*, p. 55, Leader Guide 12.)

D.) O.F.S. Networking: A noticeable change in the *Rule* promulgated on June 24, 1978, is the networking of communication and responsibilities for Secular Franciscans today, not only within our own local Fraternity, but with the other fraternities and the other levels (such as the regional and national fraternities).

Q7. How well have we ourselves been developing this expected networking?

E.) The Important Role of the Council: This is also emphasized: (*O.F.S. Rule*, Article #21) “On various levels, each fraternity is animated and guided by a council and minister ...” (Article #24) “To foster communion among members, the council should organize regular and frequent meetings of the community as well as meeting with other Franciscan groups, especially with youth groups. It should adopt appropriate means for growth in Franciscan and ecclesial life and encourage everyone to a life of fraternity.” [Underline added for emphasis.]

F.) Role of the Council – Need for a Council: These members help determine “Where are we headed?” They are asked by their positions to supply means for fraternal growth. They are called; they promise to help the Fraternity, not with arrogance, nor with indifference, but with dedication and with faithfulness. The Fraternity needs the blessings of the Council. According to our *General Constitutions* (Article #50.1): “It is the duty of the Council of the local Fraternity: – to promote the initiatives necessary for fostering fraternal life, for improving the human, Christian, and Franciscan formation of its members and for sustaining them in their witness and commitment in the world; – to make concrete and courageous choices, appropriate for the situation of the Fraternity, from among the numerous activities possible in the field of the apostolate.”

- Minister
- Vice-Minister
- Formation Director
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Councilor(s)
- Spiritual Assistant

G.) Financial Support: Part of our caring and sharing in Fraternity includes sacrificing for it, which includes financial support. This is addressed in (*O.F.S. Rule*, Article #25) “Regarding expenses ... all the brothers and sisters should offer a contribution according to their means. Local fraternities should contribute toward the expenses of the higher fraternity councils.” [Underline added for emphasis.]

H.) Visitations: Our *Rule* (Article #26) states: “To promote fidelity to the charism as well as observance of the Rule and to receive greater support in the life of the fraternity, the minister or president, with the consent of the council, should take care to ask for a regular pastoral visit by the competent religious superiors as well as for a fraternal visit from those of the higher fraternities, according to the norm of the Constitutions.” [Underline added for emphasis.]

Q8. How are arrangements made for these visitations?

I.) Elections: Speaking of councils raises the need for elections – to fulfill responsibilities to and for Fraternity, as well as being willing nominee for positions of service.

Q9. How do I make my judgment when it comes to elections in my Fraternity? – as a potential nominee for office and making my choice? Why are there term-limits?

Please read from the *General Constitutions*, Articles #28-32, 49-53.

[Please see the Documentation page for: Abbreviations, Copyright permissions, and References.]