



Franciscans of the Prairie Region's Ongoing Formation, April 14, 2018

Background: June 24, 2018 is the 40th Anniversary of the promulgation of the current *Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order*.

Fraternal Visitor, Mary Bittner, O.F.S., NAFRA Vice-Minister, facilitated a hands-on formation experience for the Regional Fraternity Council and Observers. Mary stated that during this Visitation she wished to work with us on our *Rule*, reminding us that there are not 26 Rules, but instead we have one *Rule* with 26 Articles.

Mary noted that only a few people present were professed under the prior *Rule* of 1883. She pointed out that the old *Rule* was very specific on how we were to live and in what specific ways we were called to do so. Then jumping ahead to Vatican II, she noted we were asked by the Holy Father to return to our roots. He was referring to all Religious Orders. He called us to refresh ourselves.

Mary then outlined a project that our General Spiritual Assistants did to rewrite/revise the *Rule of 1883*. This effort was brought to the "body" and the response was negative. She pointed out that one could read more of this history as some of the information is found in the appropriate chapter of the *FUN Manual*. However, upon hearing the comments, the Friars met again and realized that when they had previously met there were no Secular Franciscans present. Therefore, in 1969 a Congress convened in Assisi which brought forth a listing of 17 Essential Elements of a spirituality of a new *Rule*, and also 6 more point emphasizing Franciscan Spirituality. Then in 1978, *The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* was finalized and promulgated on June 24, 1978 by Blessed Pope Paul VI.

Mary asked each of us to look back to the time of Francis and the first *Rule* of his teachings, pointing out they came from Scripture. She then asked everyone to reflect individually on how he/she would make a *Rule of Life* to inspire us to express or reflect our way of living the Gospel.

After some personal reflection time, the participants were divided into small groups. Each group designed their own *Rule* using Scripture quotes and Franciscan spirituality. After an allotted time, each group had a spokesperson who shared the group's *Rule* with the entire group. Many ideas and passages from Scriptures were shared, such as: Acts 2; Phil 2; Col. 3:12; Psalms 1-41, 37:5-7; Matt. 4-8, 25, 28; Mark 1; Luke 10:29, 15:11-32, 24:13; John 1, 6, 10-14, 21; Jer. 15:16 & Isaiah 42. Mary thanked everyone for their willingness to share, and noted how each of us brought forth different Scriptures and thoughts.