

# “You Are Love:” Fraternity is our Workshop

by Diane F. Menditto, OFS  
National Vice Minister

“Let them love one another, as the Lord says: This is my commandment: love one another as I have loved you. Let them express the love they have for one another by their deeds, as the Apostle says: Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and truth.” (Earlier Rule FA:ED 1, 72)

In April, I was privileged to attend a meeting of the Consilium Internationale Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis (CIOFS) Formation Secretariat in Rome. Upon my return, I wrote about the experience in a blog post that is now on our national website.

In that post, I spoke about how grateful I am for the gift of fraternity: “What is truly special and emotional for me, though, is to see how people of different backgrounds, languages, and cultures are so much alike in our love for one another, for God, and for our Franciscan vocation. The Holy Spirit has given each one of us the exact gifts and talents we need to allow us to get along and to be productive. It’s a bit of a miracle to see what even a tiny “temporary” fraternity can accomplish if we are open to the Spirit and to one another.”

The Instrumentum Laboris, written in preparation for the General Chapter to be held in November, announces that “You are love.” (See link below.) It asks us “to restore meaning and significance to our way of living the Rule;” “to allow ourselves to be touched by the suffering of others;” and to use our Rule and General Constitutions as guidelines to help us be love as Secular Franciscans.


How do we learn to put our Rule and Constitutions to use? Where do we learn to be touched by the sufferings of others and to be patient with them? Where do we learn to live the Gospel and seek the daily conversion that we all need? Where do we practice loving one another?

In the many years I have spent as a formator and a servant leader, I have come to the conclusion that

the best workshop for learning to “be love” is the fraternity. It is the first place where we are guided to put the Rule into practice by interacting with those who, though different than ourselves, are on the “same road” following Jesus in the footsteps of St. Francis. It is where we learn the essential ingredients that not only help us in fraternity life but in all we do in our family life, professional life, and social life.

In fraternity we learn about collaboration, communication, community, commitment, and conversion. Each of these essential elements requires that we be less self-centered and desire the “good of the other.” This is one of the definitions of love, “to desire the good of the other.” We learn exactly what we will need in order to “be love” both in and out of fraternity. We learn that if we are love we will be...

- ...quick to listen and slow to speak.
- ...quick to praise and slow to criticize.
- ...quick to collaborate and slow to go it alone.
- ...quick to counsel and slow to condemn.
- ...quick to step up and slow to sit back.
- ...quick to share and slow to withhold.
- ...quick to comply and slow to put off.
- ...quick to respond and slow to ignore.
- ...quick to ask questions and slow to assume.
- ...quick to seek peace and slow to disrupt.
- ...quick to embrace and slow to judge.
- ...quick to unite and slow to divide.
- ...quick to forgive and slow to hold a grudge.
- ...quick to welcome and slow to shun.
- ...quick to empty ourselves in service and slow to be full of ourselves.
- ...quick to call on the Holy Spirit and slow to rely on ourselves.
- ...quick to pray and slow to lose heart.

In the workshop of fraternity, we learn to love and to **be love.** 

<https://www.secularfranciscansusa.org/wp-content/uploads/Instrumentum-Laboris-2020.pdf>