**Slide 1**

Let Us Pray!

Most High, Glorious God; Bring light to the darkness of my heart. Give me right faith, certain hope and perfect charity, insight and wisdom, so that I can always observe your holy and true command. Amen.

**Slide 2**

Saint Francis; our “seraphic Father”, who followed in the footsteps of Jesus & very demonstratively showed us how to rebuild the church, follow the Franciscan path, who sought to be a living Gospel for all to hear, introduced us to our Franciscan Family, wrote our Rule of Life and taught us our Charism.

**Slide 3**

Pope Francis, our “Holy Father” has inspired us into conversations and reflection on the meaning of Christian discipleship. He is challenging us to “preach by our deeds”, just as St. Francis did. He is showing us how to wash the feet of others, what to do/how to act in the marketplace, how to pray, and have unswerving devotion to the poor and the social gospel of the Church. He is touching the hearts of all of us! We are seeing the Church in a new light. Our love of the poor is the evangelical poverty that inspired St. Francis to kiss the leper, to give all his wealth to the poor and to see Lady Poverty as freedom from the shackles of wealth.
On Nov. 24, 2013, the Solemnity of Jesus Christ, the King of the Universe, in conclusion to the Year of Faith, Pope Francis published the apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium (The Joy of the Gospel) that followed up the Synod of Bishops held in Rome in 2012 on “The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith.” Evangelii Gaudium is a long document, yet, it is easy to follow. Its central message is how a personal relationship with Jesus Christ in His Body the Church naturally drives us out joyfully to evangelize others.

During Jeff’s presentation on vocations, the question was asked, “How do we get more people?” The Joy of the Gospel may be answering that question for us. It’s all about Evangelization. The word Evangelization can be a scary word because we think of the word pros•e•lyt•ize which reminds us of the Church of Latter Day Saints or Jehovah’s Witnesses who come knocking at our door trying to convert us to their faith. (Quote page 8 EG)

This exhortation has five chapters. In Chapter One (19-41), the Holy Father begins with the church and how we need to transpose everything into a missionary key, going beyond our comfort zones to take the Good News of Christ joyfully to the peripheries. In Chapter Two (50-109) Pope Francis discusses the crisis of community in the modern world, brought about in part by trickle-down economics and consumer culture, which generates individualism and indifference. In Chapter Three (110-175) he explores certain aspects of evangelization, such as the need to enculturate the Gospel and the role of preaching.

Chapter Four (176-258) is about the social dimension of the Church’s mission, especially her preferential option for the poor – “I want a Church that is poor for the poor” – and the need to build peace, justice and fraternity. The Holy Father concludes the exhortation with a brief chapter on the spirituality of being a missionary disciple (259-288). Like Benedict XVI, Pope Francis is aware that the cross looms large when we claim to be disciples of the Son of God – when we seek to live the Gospel sacrificially in our particular corners of creation.
### Slide 6

But the vision of the Church held by Pope Francis and his predecessor includes Christians giving witness that crosses need not be avoided out of fear – especially fear that when we give all that we are, we will be left with nothing. Rather, we will have more than we could expect – fulfillment, meaning and joy. // In Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis exhorts us to ponder, interiorize, and then share the truth with a dark and waiting world.

### Slide 7

EG Chapter 4 tells us, enlightens us, guides us on The Social Dimension of Evangelization which include:

- Communal and Societal Repercussions of the Kerygma (kerygma means: to cry or proclaim as a herald; preach the Good News to the poor, the blind, and the captive.)
- The Inclusion of the Poor in Society
- The Common Good and Peace in Society, and
- Social Dialogue as a Contribution to Peace

**EXPRESS THIS IDEA!**

This is a beautiful summary of points of who we are and how we transition of the “head smart” of the FUN Manual to the “heart smart” of transformation!

We have learned from the FUN Manual more about our Church, more about our Franciscan Identity and Sense of Belonging, Franciscan Theology, and much more, these past 3 years. Have we let it touch our hearts? Have we let this information speak to us? Have we let Jesus speak to us through all of the information? Or, have we kept it in our heads? Has this wonderfully FUN informational time moved us? .....moved us to own it, to love it, to delve deeper into our Catholic faith and our Franciscan way of life? I hope so!
Chapter Two
The Way of Life
Articles 4-19

Article 4: The rule and life of the Secular Franciscan is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.

Article 5: Secular Franciscan, 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 6: They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by Profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words.

.......and so on.......

The Secular Franciscan Rule and the Apostolic Exhortation have so much in common that you would think that the Holy Father was holding our Rule in his hand as he worked on the document. Of course, what inspired him and what inspired our Rule is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ whom St. Francis tried to follow in every way until he was transformed inside and out into another Christ.

As followers of St. Francis we are called to be joyful followers of Jesus, and Evangelii Gaudium leads us in that direction. If we think of our vocation as Catholics and as Franciscans we can name the joys and probably add even more:

The Joy of Faith
The Joy of Prayer
The Joy of Conversion
The Joy of Relationship
The Joy of Fraternity
The Joy of Detachment
The Joy of Service
Perfect Joy
The Joy of Salvation

This is where the Joy of the Gospel is leading us. It is leading us outside of ourselves---from self-centeredness to selflessness.
So then, just as we are challenged by our Rule, *Pope Francis is challenging all Catholics, but, I believe, especially those of us who are Franciscans to live up to the Rule we have professed and thereby to live up to the Gospel.*

Among the challenges presented to us as Catholics and as Franciscans we are asked to do the following:

- Meditate on Scripture
- Live the message of the Gospel
- Pray and contemplate
- Seek justice and peace—reach out to the poor
- Thrive in Community-Fraternity
- Strive for personal daily conversion

It comes as no surprise then, that we can line up the Joy of the Gospel with our Rule.

The next part of this presentation is not so much a talk on the document as it is a meditation on what calls out to us as Franciscans and Catholics both *from the document and from our Rule*.

In a talk at our region retreat this summer, Fr. Dan Horan spoke about Franciscan spirituality. He said that there is really nothing so “special” about it—it is simply to live the gospel. He said “simply”—but we know that it’s not so simple. We strive for this every day of our lives as we attempt to go from Gospel to life and life to the Gospel.

As we meditate on this Apostolic Exhortation, we need to take time to think about who we are in our relationship with God.
In paragraph 152 Pope Francis suggests a way that we can do this. “There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call Lectio Divina.” 152

As we linger over those pages let us remember St. Clare who tells us to Gaze on him, consider him, contemplate him, imitate him. What is truly ours as Franciscans is the action/ imitation called for in the Scripture. St. Clare calls us to transform our very being.

So, what is he challenging us to do? First he tells us what the Gospel is NOT—“accumulation….” In this quote the Holy Father is apparently telling us more what NOT to do—all the little things that make us feel good don’t necessarily change us—instead, he is asking us to “put on Christ.”

Then he goes on to challenge us – every one of us is meant to have an impact on society—

Who are we? – are we walking the walk and talking the talk? Are we Being transparent—are we the open gospel that people will see and will want more?

Our Rule calls us to encounter the living person of Jesus in one another – usually not so difficult in a room full of Franciscans, but we are also called to the same thing in a room full of those who couldn’t be more different than we are. Maybe even those whom we don’t like very much…
The Holy Father goes on to say that every person is worthy of our giving. We are all pilgrims on the same road. Sometimes it’s not so easy to trust our brothers and sisters (depending on how much we have been hurt)—how are we at trusting strangers? But, that is what is asked of us.

We are challenged by the Gospel to “go forth from ourselves”

We find it in numerous places—

- “As you did it to one of these, the least of my brethren, you did it to me” (Mt 25: 40).

The way we treat others has a transcendent dimension:

- “The measure you give will be the measure you get” (Mt 7: 2).

It corresponds to the mercy which God has shown us:

- “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you... For the measure you give will be the measure you get back” (Lk 6: 36-38).

Our Rule exhorts us to be living examples of Christ’s love and work in the world.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 21</th>
<th>This is speaking directly to us as Franciscans!</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evangelii Gaudium</strong></td>
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<td>- “The kerygma has a clear social content: at the very heart of the Gospel is life in community and engagement with others.” 4:177</td>
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<td>- “By preaching Jesus Christ, who is himself peace (cf. Eph 2: 14), the new evangelization calls on every baptized person to be a peacemaker and a credible witness to a reconciled life.” 4:239</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 22</th>
<th>&quot;Let us all remember this: one cannot proclaim the Gospel of Jesus without the <strong>tangible witness</strong> of one's life.&quot;</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evangelii Gaudium</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Challenge</td>
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<tr>
<td>- “Jesus wants evangelizers who proclaim the good news not only with words, but above all by a life transfigured by God’s presence.” 5:259</td>
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<tr>
<th>Slide 23</th>
<th>We start new every day—every day a little piece of the old us should die so that we are able to renew ourselves little by little in the image of Christ...</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Article 7— OFS Rule</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- “...motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel itself calls conversion. Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>Slide 24</th>
<th>We should remember that we are the original brothers and sisters of penance. We have to go back and examine the original vision of Francis. Have we become complacent? Are we “humble and proud of it?”</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evangelii Gaudium</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- “How good it feels to come back to him whenever we are lost! Let me say this once more: God never tires of forgiving us; we are the ones who tire of seeking his mercy.” 1:3</td>
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"All that we teach in our formation programs, all that we learn at workshops and on retreats and through homilies and spiritual reading is not just information. We need to be open to **transformation**—to be so steeped in what we have learned that, like Francis, we become other Christs."
Anne Mulqueen: “The culmination of conversion is transformation.”

Our Rule calls us to prayer

We are also called by this document to spend prolonged moments in prayer.

"Spirit-filled evangelizers are evangelizers who pray and work.”
Chapter 5: 262

We are very active in our servant leadership roles and get so busy that sometimes our prayer suffers.

Once again on our retreat, Fr. Dan spoke about contemplation as “being, not doing;” emptying of self; seeing beyond the surface; listening to the Lord.

Here it is again—a life transfigured by God’s presence.
### Slide 29

**Article 11 – OFS Rule**
- “Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. …
- Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.”

Detachment, simplifying our needs

Purify our hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power. We are called to be “servant leaders” – sometimes we forget this fact

(Anne Mulqueen) “We must have faith in others to do what they have been called to do.”

### Slide 30

**Evangelii Gaudium**
- “I (also) think of the real joy shown by others who, even amid pressing professional obligations, were able to preserve, in detachment and simplicity, a heart full of faith.” 1:7

Each individual Christian and every community is called to be an instrument of God for the liberation and promotion of the poor, and for enabling them to be fully a part of society. This demands that we be docile and attentive to the cry of the poor and to come to their aid. 187

We incarnate the duty of hearing the cry of the poor when we are deeply moved by the suffering of others. 193

### Slide 31

**Evangelii Gaudium**
- “Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor.” 1:2

**The Challenge**

Big challenge

St. Elizabeth of Hungary stepped outside of her family traditions and expectations to serve the poor. Passion and spirit led her drive. She shows us that God gives you the strength.

### Slide 32

**Article 13 & 14 – OFS Rule**
- “A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ
- Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively.”

As Franciscans we find out joy in fraternity—community—in interacting—being in relationship with one another and with all people.
Falls easily off the tongue, have we become immune to the words? We can forget this easily when things get tough in our fraternities or in our families—this call is for every one of us every day.

This speaks to us on every level... family life, fraternity life, working on a commission or committee, dealing with our neighbors. Seeking (stepping up and stepping out) the happiness of others is not easy, yet this is what we are called to do.

Ann—we can fail even when we look successful if we do not lead with love. (Love is opening ourselves to be hurt)

Consequently, no one can demand that religion should be relegated to the inner sanctum of personal life,... Who would claim to lock up in a church and silence the message of St. Francis of Assisi or Blessed Teresa of Calcutta? They themselves would have found this unacceptable.

We are always told to move forward toward our brothers and sisters, whoever they may be.
### Slide 38

**As We Go Forth from this Place**
- We need to step outside of ourselves.
- Pope Francis challenges us to “be who we say we are.” (Dan Horan, OFM)

**What should we remember?**

Sometimes we need to “get over ourselves,” step out and step up.

Be who we say we are…

Be refreshed and renewed in our lives as Catholics and Franciscans.

### Slide 39

**As We Go Forth from this Place**
- Who are we according to our Rule?
- What are the challenges that we have been given here at Chapter?
- What opened your heart?
- What will we take back to our regions and our fraternities?

**Meditation**

Inspired by the quotes

If at some point you can change the “we” to “I”…in all the statements…that really will be working toward personal transformation.

For now, join with a partner or in a triad and take a few minutes to begin the process.

Think in terms of our Rule

Think about how you felt “before and after” meditating on these quotes, being together here in this place.

We will ask for a brief sharing on what came out in your discussions.

We would like to follow up on your ideas.

### Slide 40