

NEWS & VIEWS



CNSA

TAU USA - Summer, 2018 - Lester Bach OFM Cap - CNSA Emeritus

Some Considerations

We are celebrating the 40th anniversary of the 1978 OFS Rule, and prepare for the 800th anniversary of the establishment of the OFS. Take some time to reflect on the following questions. They can help to enrich ways to fulfill your profession of the **OFS Rule and Constitutions**.

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1. **From a Franciscan perspective, evaluate political attitudes in our country?** What changes in your political opinions or convictions would better reflect the Gospel?

Cfr: Constitutions - Article 8.2

2. **How do ideas or issues in society reflect or not reflect the Gospel?** What, in your response as a Franciscan, needs change and/or conversion, both personally and as a fraternity, without creating enemies?

Cfr: OFS Constitutions - Article 11

3. **How does the Franciscan spirit call for welcoming strangers and foreigners to our country, neighborhoods and fraternity?**

Cfr: Rule #13 and OFS Constitutions - Article 18.2

4. **Do your fraternity-gatherings share personal stories about the way we live the OFS Rule and Constitutions?** How could such sharing help your personal growth?

Cfr: OFS Constitutions - Article 24.2

5. Describe how you **work together** and show the **personal witness** called for in:

Article 17.1 of the Constitutions

6. How do you (and the fraternity) fulfill **Article 18.2 & Article 18.3 of the OFS Constitutions?** How would *conversion* help to 'give personal witness' in living these articles?

7. **How does your Franciscan spirit show itself:** in family relationships? In groups you support? In contemplative prayer? In your workplace? In fraternity life? In parish life?

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Re: Devotions: *The Synod Fathers stressed the urgency of discovering the true spiritual values present in popular religiosity, so that, enriched by genuine Catholic doctrine, it might lead to a sincere conversion and a practical exercise of charity. ...*

Popular Devotional Practices - USCCB - Page 18

Cfr: OFS Rule #9

Quotes from the OFS Constitutions

Cfr: *Essential Documents of the Secular Franciscan Order*

Article 3.3 *The vocation to the OFS is a vocation to live the Gospel in fraternal communion. For this purpose the members of the OFS gather in ecclesial communities which are called fraternities.*

Article 8.2 *They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:*

- + *Rule 7 in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation.*
- + *Rule 4 open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situation, "going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel."*
- + *in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.*

Article 11 *Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to his inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things "the Spirit of God at work within them."*

Article 17.1 *Rule 6 Called to work together in building up the Church as the sacrament of salvation for all and, through their baptism and profession, made "witnesses and instruments of her mission," Secular Franciscans proclaim Christ by their life and words. Their preferred apostolate is personal witness in the environment in which they live and service for building up the Kingdom of God within the situations of this world.*

Article 18.2 *Rule 13 They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.*

Article 18.3 *Rule 13 They should work together with movements which promote the building of fraternity among peoples: they should be committed to "create worthy conditions of life" for all and to work for the freedom of all people.*

Article 18.4 *Following the example of Francis, patron of ecologists, they should actively put forward initiatives that care for creation and should work with others in efforts*



that both put a stop to polluting and degrading nature and also establish circumstances of living and environment which would not be a threat to the human person. Cfr: *Laudate Si* - #9

Article 21.2 *Leisure and recreation have their own value and are necessary for personal development. Secular Franciscans should maintain a balance between work and rest and should strive to create meaningful forms of using leisure time.*

Article 23.1 *Rule 19 Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:*

- + they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;
- + they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate, **individually and as a fraternity**, with initiatives of the Pope, the local churches, and the Franciscan Family;
- + they should collaborate with those movements and its institutions which promote peace while respecting its authentic foundations.

Article 24.2 *In the fraternity:*

- + the spirituality of the family and of marriage and the Christian attitude towards family problems should be a theme for **dialogue and for the sharing of experiences**.
- + they should share the important moments of the family life of their Franciscan brothers and sisters and they should give fraternal attention to those - single - widows - single parents - separated - divorced - who are living difficult situations;
- + Rule 19 they should create conditions suitable for **dialogue between generations**;
- + The formation of groups of married couples and of family groups should be fostered.

Article 27.1 *Rule 29 The brothers and sisters, progressing in age, should learn to accept illness and increasing difficulties and to give a deeper sense to their life. This should be undertaken with increasing detachment as they set out for the Promised Land. They should be firmly convinced that the community of those who believe in Christ and who love one another in Him will go forward into eternal life as the "communion of Saints."*

Article 30.1 *The brothers and sisters are co-responsible for the life of the fraternity to which they belong and to the OFS as the organic union of all fraternities throughout the world.*



Article 30.2 *The sense of co-responsibility of the members requires personal presence, witness, prayer, and active collaboration, in accordance with each one's situation and possible obligations for the animation of the fraternity.*

Two theologies in the Church reflect reasons for Jesus coming among us.

1. Jesus came as a result of the sin of human beings. Sin prompted the Trinity to bring us salvation by sending Jesus as our savior. In this theology, our human sinfulness is the reason for Jesus' coming among us. It is a common Church teaching.

2. Franciscan theology, an approved theology, looks at it differently. Franciscan theology believes that the Trinity's decision to send Jesus **springs from the Trinity's love** for us. St. John puts it this way in his 1st letter:

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*My dear friends, let us love one another, because the source of love is God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving know nothing of God, for God is love. **This is how he showed his love among us; He sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through Him.***

1 John 4: 7-9

*This is how we know that we dwell in him and he dwells in us; he has imparted his Spirit to us. Moreover, we have seen for ourselves, and we are witnesses, that the Father has sent his Son to be the savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is God's Son, God dwells in him and he in God. **Thus we have come to know and believe in the love which God has for us.***

1 John 4:13-16

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Franciscans believe that the reason God sent Jesus to us is because God is love and acts out of love for us. We believe that love prompts the actions of the Trinity. St. Francis put it this way in his earlier Rule:

... We thank you for as through Your Son You created us, so through Your holy love with which You loved us You brought about his birth as true God and true man ...

*The Earlier Rule - Francis of Assisi, the saint
Vol 1 - Page 8*

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Hope is a gift of the Trinity. Love overcomes sin in our lives. In turn, we share God's love with others. We express love, empowered by the Holy Spirit, in imitation of the words and actions of Jesus - God-among-us! We follow St. Francis' spirit by living the OFS Rule and Constitutions.



The picture in the lower left column, was taken at a Korean fraternity in southern California. South Korea has about 15,000 Secular Franciscans.