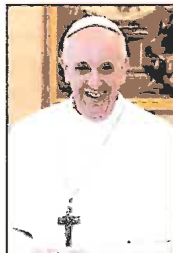




Reflection

The Trinity dwells in us. Our personal awareness of the indwelling of the Trinity in our lives makes a difference in how we live. The relationship between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is strong, unique, powerful, gentle, and wise. It is their nature to love one another and us. Nothing we do can diminish their love for us. Our betrayals, indifference, or choosing ideas and opinions that go counter to Jesus' words and actions, do not change the Trinity's nature to show us their love. The Trinity is faithful to their nature - to love us ... *With a tenderness which never disappoints, but is always capable of restoring our joy, he (the Trinity) makes it possible to lift up our heads and to start anew.* (cf. Evangelii Gaudium - Pope Francis - Paragraph #3)



The Trinity empowers good choices as we respond to the Gospel. The Trinity's desires are revealed through Jesus' humanity. With gracious love the Trinity seeks our deliberate, reflective, personal, loving responses and not a robotic action that is thought-less.

From the beginning the Trinity established a relationship with creation, especially their human creation. The unity and loving interaction of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reveal a relational mystery and offer us a model to imitate. They help us understand our call to glorify the Trinity by personal willingness to be united to and love one another. We are called by the Father, Jesus proclaims the message, and we are empowered by the Holy Spirit.

We respond to and are guided by the love revealed through Jesus' words and actions. Jesus' life illustrates the way we are called to deal with one another - in LOVE. The Trinity's love is a gift, given freely. Their actions challenge us to love one another, enemies and all, freely and unconditionally.



Franciscan love for others is a gift - given whether people deserve it or not. "How and why" we love one another, in multiple situations, offers a human model for people that is based on the Trinity's faithful love. The ways and means of our decisions follow the pattern given by Jesus in the Gospel. It builds the Kingdom of God, a *community of love*.

(con't)

Spring - 2014

An OFS Practice

Check your Franciscan way of responding to your life experiences. You might sense a need for *conversion*, (cf. OFS Rule #7). Faithfulness to the OFS way of life is the reason we model a Franciscan-Gospel way of dealing with issues and life situations.

Check your life-examples that call for personal conversion. The Trinity assists us when conversion is needed. Jeremiah addresses this issue:

I went down to the potter's house where I found him working at the wheel. Now and then a vessel he was making from the clay would be spoilt in his hands and he would remould it into another vessel to his liking. "... can I not deal with you as this potter deals with his clay?"

Jeremiah 18:3-4, 6

E.g. - 1. Some OFS people don't like the way groups, like FAN or JPIC or Formation etc, do things. Some folks separate themselves from the OFS rather than engage in dialogue which could lead to understanding and healthy change.

If people avoid dialogue, their actions often bring division rather than unity. Their example fails to reflect the Franciscan spirit.

How would you handle such situations? Is separation from the OFS a Franciscan solution? Does it reflect our OFS profession? Can people who ignore dialogue claim they are building up the Kingdom of God? Can OFS members separate from fraternity life and still claim to be building a *community of love*? Achieving separation is not a Franciscan goal. Working for unity is!

Dialogue would offer a better outcome if we gave it a chance. Perhaps we need guidance to settle things in a Franciscan spirit and maintain fraternal unity.

cf. *The Franciscan Journey* - page 158-161

We love freely, offering new life to people. People are not required to earn our love. We offer it freely in ways that fit the issue or situation we encounter in one another (or ourselves). What we say or do may require a single act of love or it may require years of love before achieving its goal. Love does not give up. Love finds ways to persist for the sake of the loved ones. *It avoids words and actions that would separate us from one another.* Franciscans are prompted by love to *achieve unity*. Disagreement should never be allowed to break up the *community of love*.

The individualism of our postmodern and globalized era fosters a lifestyle which weakens the development and stability of personal relationships and distorts family bonds. Pastoral activity needs to bring out more clearly the fact that our relationship with the Father demands and encourages a communion which heals, promotes and reinforces interpersonal bonds.

Evangelii Gaudium - Pope Francis - Paragraph #67

The Trinity acts with a love that never gives up. They seek unity no matter how long it takes. Franciscans imitate the persistent and freely-given love springing from a heart where the Holy Spirit dwells. We find direction in the words of the Father on the mount of Transfiguration: "***This is my beloved son; listen to him***" (Mark 9: 7). Franciscans commit themselves, 24/7, to listen to and imitate the spirit, words, and actions of Jesus. The Trinity empowers our faithfulness to the Gospel. It is "why" we work to build a *community of love*. Listen to these words of hope:

The memory of my distress and my wanderings is wormwood and gall. I remember them indeed and am filled with despondency. I shall wait patiently because I take this to heart: The Lord's love is surely not exhausted, nor has his compassion failed; they are new every morning, so great is his constancy. "The Lord," I say, "is all that I have; therefore I shall wait for him patiently." The Lord is good to those who look to him, to anyone who seeks him;

Lamentations 3:19-25 - REB

Goodness and joy are qualities we share with others. As they blossom within us we find fresh ways to express them. They become rooted in our hearts. Read paragraphs #9 and #10 in Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium*. As Franciscans we make love present in a world where hatred, violence, and revenge often find a home.



We express love and show mercy as a way of evangelization. The Trinity's love and mercy accomplish things we could not do alone. At times it may be difficult to express love and show mercy. But we get support from the *community of love*, (both Church and fraternity). Franciscans help us be confident in practicing love and showing mercy through their shared support.

Picture - Encarnacion del Pozo - OFS General Minister

2. *We always recite the Franciscan Crown (or some other form of prayer) at our gatherings. We can't understand why the council keeps changing our prayer forms when we always did it this way! Why should we change?*

Behind this opinion is the idea that if we repeat a thing often enough it becomes THEE way it should be done. Using the same devotions all the time only proves that we use the same devotions all the time. E.g. If we always used garlic when we prepare a meal it does not prove that garlic must always be used whenever we prepare a meal. Some folks might not like garlic! Repeating devotions is no guarantee of their effectiveness unless the members give clear evidence of regular 'conversion.'

Most devotions result from private revelations. The USA Bishops offer the following advice:

"The criterion for the truth and value of a private revelation is therefore its orientation to Christ himself. When it leads us away from him, when it becomes independent of him or even presents itself as another and better plan of salvation, more important than the Gospel, then it certainly does not come from the Holy Spirit, who guides us more deeply into the Gospel and not away from it.



Popular Devotional Practices - USCCB - Page 15

Conversion is part of Franciscan life. Even when it touches something we treasure, we **dialogue with an open mind and heart**. There is more than one way to bring change to fraternity-community life. Dialogue makes a difference. Article 19 of the OFS Rule is clear: ... *they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue ...*"

Issues may require dialogue and/or research. Practically, it should be unknown that issues cause separation in fraternal life.

Franciscans seek unity! Otherwise we may simply imitate the divisions that wreak havoc in society. Franciscans must offer an alternative, a Franciscan solution flowing from their profession = UNITY.

Shalom