



FORMATION COMMISSION

LIVING THE RULE MEDITATIONS FROM A MORNING COMMUTE

by Mary Anne Lenzi, OFS

It was an ordinary day. I opened my eyes at 5:54 a.m., thanked the Lord for a new day, a good night's rest, the roof over my head, the food on my table and the ability to work. Yes, work. I rolled over to savor the last few minutes before 6:00 a.m.

It was an ordinary day. I opened my eyes, instantly aware of the melody from the 7:00 a.m. alarm. Ahhh! **WORK!** I was up and quickly dressed. I added a petition to my morning prayer: Oh Lord, remove the clutter from my mind, help me to focus so that I may follow you today, just like St. Francis! Amen! I pulled my lunch bag from the refrigerator. Grabbed my "to go" mug and was off, ready for the morning traffic merge.

Midway through the commute, distracted by blaring inner chatter, I missed a turn. Oops! New direction! Focus. Slowing down and paying closer attention to a revised route, I took a deep breath. OK, it's You and me. Lead me Lord! Easing into the traffic flow I noticed the bumper sticker on the car ahead, I read: **I LOVE MY DOG!** How nice, I thought, to have a cuddly creature, a companion for the journey, that loves without question. Too bad they make me sneeze! Yet isn't it a beautiful morning?

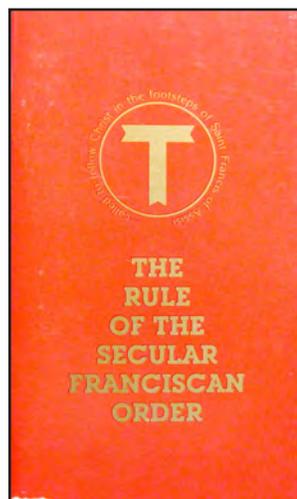
Continuing the journey, and approaching the next signal, two perfectly placed notes came into view on the trunk of a Golden Toyota. I read: **JESUS IS THE ANSWER!** and **BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS!** OK, you have my attention. I inched my way up, parallel to the vehicle, in the hope of catching the eye of the driver. I considered a loud "honk"; however, that might have startled instead of conveying the joyful, familial connection I felt. I hoped to share a smile and big thumbs up. We were brother and sister on the road.



Just a little further, my destination in sight, I stopped for the last signal. Through the back window of the SUV ahead of me, hanging from the rearview mirror, I gazed, somewhat amazed, while my heart read: **TAKE UP YOUR CROSS AND FOLLOW ME!** I took another deep, peaceful breath. *This is what I want, this is what I seek, this is what I desire to do with all my heart.* The light changed to "go.. In half a block, I pulled into my usual parking spot, pressed 16 on the elevator pad and arrived at the office renewed in spirit and purpose, eager to share and to serve. What began as ordinary became so much more!

It was an extraordinary day! Weeks have gone by, yet this experience remains with me. I ruminate on the route and meditate on its movement. It has become a commute of contemplation. I asked the Lord to lead me. I let go and let Him take the wheel when the road before me changed. I paid attention and faithfully followed the words. They were simple and direct.

It was an extraordinary day when I asked to be admitted to profession of the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order and to make a permanent commitment to the gospel life. It has been several years. I needed a reminder on how to live my promise daily. God answers prayer! The Rule is my roadmap.



THE RULE AS ROAD MAP

Excerpts from Chapter Two – The Way of Life

PRAYER – Starting Point – 5. As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. . . .

WORK – Daily Destination -13. Let them esteem work both as a gift

and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community . . .

I LOVE MY DOG! - Path of Awareness - 15. Moreover, they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which "bear the imprint of the Most High," and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.

JESUS IS THE ANSWER! – Entering the Highway – 1. The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father’s love, is the way to him, is the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

BE STRONG and COURAGEOUS! – Fearless in the Fast Lane – 12. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of

public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.

TAKE UP YOUR CROSS – The Road to Renewal – 4. United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance” and 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 calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. . . . the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father’s mercy and the source of grace.

Suggested ongoing formation:

In solitude meditate on, or in fraternity share, your everyday experiences and how they relate to our Rule. Each day we need to pray the Rule in order to live the Rule."

Be mindful of the ordinary, it is good, reliable, efficient.

Contemplate the extraordinary; it is All Good, Supreme Good, Total Good.

Peace to you and every good.





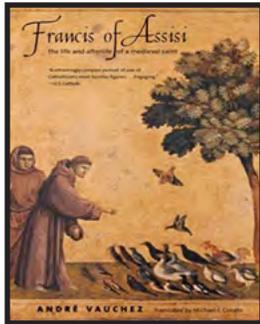
ONGOING FORMATION RESOURCE SUGGESTIONS

Francis of Assisi, the Life and Afterlife of a Medieval Saint

Andre Vauchez, translated by Michael F. Cusato

Review by Anne Mulqueen, OFS, Spiritual Assistant, National Formation Commission

There are four sections to this book. Much of Vauchez' research is based on the Legend of the Three Companions.



The first section is biographical and not all scholars agree on the biographical information. However, Vauchez does portray Francis as devoted to God and emphasizes his humanity. He sees Francis rooted in the world.

The second and third sections are stories of St. Francis—the myths and legends—his canonization and construction of the basilica. Vauchez talks of Francis' desire to renounce power and embrace poverty. Of interest is the description of how following Francis' death, the brothers lost their connection with their founder.

In section four Vauchez reflects on Francis' writings, namely the Letter to the Faithful, Francis' Testament, the Canticle of Brother Sun, and the Rules. Vauchez describes how Francis experienced God through his senses, and that Francis considered the Gospels the norm for Christian living.

Overall, Vauchez presents a human Francis – one that can be followed by anyone who desires to live the Gospel, make peace and enter into an inclusive relationships with all God's creation: human, animate and inanimate. He believes people were more attracted to Francis' authenticity and sincerity, than his brilliance or preaching.

Vauchez provides an objective assessment of St. Francis. He describes St. Francis as an ascetic and an orthodox Catholic. I believe Vauchez' book is a clear and balanced account of St. Francis' life and his legacy after his death.

**Additional Ongoing formation suggestions from Diane Menditto OFS,
National Formation Commission**



www.nowyouknowmedia.com

I strongly recommend the CDs or podcast from Now You Know Media by Bro. Bill Short, OFM on ***St. Bonaventure, The Soul's Journey Into God.*** Beautiful and easy-to-follow explanation of a very complex writing by St. Bonaventure.



www.taupublishing.org

Along with these talks, for those who are interested in a deeper experience, I recommend ***A Forty-Day Journey Into God with St. Bonaventure*** -- Tau Publishing-- by Josef Raischl, OFS and André Cirino, OFM. This book gives daily passages (and explanatory diagrams) with reflections and exercises.

For those who would like some Franciscan music in their lives, I recommend the CD and companion book ***Love Holding Love: Mantras Drawn from the Writings of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi*** also from Tau Publishing-- by Joseph Raischl, OFS, beautiful music--great for introducing prayer or a formation topic.

* NEW ONGOING FORMATION BOOKS *

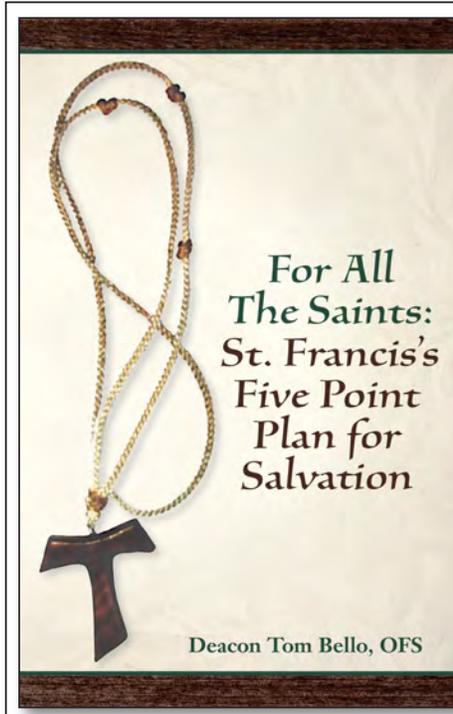
FOR ALL THE SAINTS: ST. FRANCIS'S FIVE POINT PLAN FOR SALVATION

By Deacon Tom Bello OFS

Review by Donna Hollis, OFS
Regional Minister,
Our Lady of Guadalupe Region

Within this book is a treasure of writings compiled from articles of our beloved late National Minister, Deacon Tom Bello, OFS. The articles reflect understanding he acquired from many years as a Secular Franciscan and experiences he lived out in community/fraternity. Tom speaks from the heart with all that he shares and challenges us to stretch beyond ourselves and beyond our own understanding within our service to the Secular Franciscan Order.

As a Regional Minister, I have used Tom's articles for ongoing formation and continuing education when making Regional Visitations to local Fraternities. I find these articles build unity and a wider vision of the



For All The Saints: St. Francis's Five Point Plan for Salvation

A NEW ONGOING FORMATION RESOURCE
by Tom Bello, OFS

While serving as minister of the National Secular Franciscan Fraternity, Tom Bello wrote a series of articles for the TAU-USA. This new book is a collection of these articles with discussion questions. The book is a gift from Tom to the Order to be used as an ongoing formation resource.



Purchase Price: \$10.00

Order From:

Tau Publishing
c/o Vesuvius Press Incorporated
4806 South 40th Street
Phoenix, AZ 85040

Please feel free to call us at 602-625-6183 or send us a fax at 602-651-1875.

Secular Franciscan Order for the local Fraternity. Tom's words connect the local, Regional, National and International families as one big Community. At the end of each chapter there are reflection questions for us to ponder more deeply into our calling as Secular Franciscans and to share those insights with one another. This book will be a wonderful ongoing formation resource.



**Available from
Smoky Valley Printing**

See the order form on
page 25

Waiting For Love

by Lester Bach OFM and Vinal Van Benthem OFS

Excerpt from the Preface:

Waiting for Love considers many elements of the Franciscan way of life. These ideas grow in the human mind, heart and emotions. They spring from reading, writing, reflecting, praying and acting on the gospel word as a community. We use the tools of dialogue in our interaction with one another.

Looking to the interconnectedness of the Trinity as our model, the letters and documents of popes and poets as signposts along the way, and the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order as our guide, we invite the reader to journey with us. Together we will explore how we might turn to dialogue in relationship as an alternative to individualism and divisiveness. Using the words of Scripture and examples of situations we have encountered in our own lives we will take the reader from Gospel to life and back again. And in a world where communication is too often limited to text messages and information conveyed via the internet we will come again to appreciate the joys of dialogue and simple, one-on-one conversation.

We invite you to act in ways that bring joy to your life. Among the Trinity's gifts to us is the ability to implement personal conversion and other qualities required by the OFS Rule.