

# News & Views

*Franciscan Life in the 21st Century*

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## Try this quiz

1. What should initial formation sessions accomplish? How effective is your fraternity's formation?
2. Who has the authority to appoint spiritual assistants? Who must be contacted to get a Spiritual assistant appointed?
3. Why has the Church required the OFS to have spiritual assistants? What is their role in fraternal life? How can you evaluate a person's readiness to be a spiritual assistant?
4. How many "conversions" have you had this past month? If none, how do you fulfill article #7 of the OFS Rule?
5. Who has the authority to receive the profession of fraternity candidates? Where is the profession recorded?
6. What is the purpose of the *For Up To Now* (FUN) Manual? Who should use it? What criteria do councils use in selecting initial and ongoing formation texts?
7. Besides finances, what do you contribute to fraternity life? Do you think it's enough? Why?
8. How do you fulfill the first paragraph of Article #19 of the Rule? Does it have any effect on your way of dealing with people? If

## Pope Francis

*After washing their feet he put on his garment and sat down again. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" He asked. " You call me Teacher and Lord, and rightly so, for that is what I am. Then if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you an example; you are to do as I have done for you ... "*

John 13:12-15 (REB)

Pope Francis washed the feet of prisoners, men and women, Muslim and European. - "... you are to do as I have done for you."

Pope Francis could have simply told us why he did it, but he showed us. When our Lord and Teacher sets an example we follow it, period. It is an example that carries love in its heart. It opens the door to relationships when a leader fulfills Jesus' directive: "... you also ought to wash one another's feet." It is not a story about clean feet. Rather it shows a leader illustrating the power of love - to be a servant.

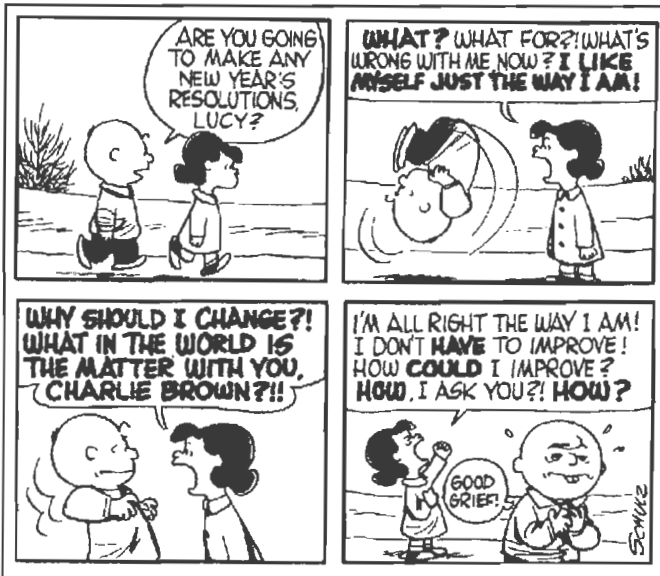
I'm certain Pope Francis will offer other examples in his life as our spiritual leader. But the lesson is clear - *Go and do likewise*. Not just to wash feet but to be leaders who serve rather than using power to dominate others. He is a good man, named after our Francis, teaching Franciscans how to follow the Gospel. *"Just do it!"* We say with gratitude: *Thank you, Pope Francis! Give us more of the same!*

## So What?

Franciscan leaders make visitations around the country and sometimes run into situations of conflict. Some Franciscans stubbornly act like they know-it-all, no matter what the "all" may be. They tell others how wrong they are. There is no *attentive listening* because they already have the answers. They know-it-all whether it is about fraternal issues or faith issues or social issues or political issues or religious issues or human dignity issues or violence issues or ... on and on. Perhaps occasionally you find yourself doing this. These actions fail to reflect the Franciscan spirit. Some Franciscans have little experience of the *radical interior change* called for by #7 of the OFS Rule.

People can stubbornly cling to their opinions. They are good debaters, winning arguments with the power of personality or supposed intelligence. Perhaps their need to be right springs from a fear of what *conversion* would require. *Attentive listening* and *dialogue* are not part of their vocabulary. They believe that they offer service by always being right. Thus they can guide us with their wisdom and experience.(?) It is difficult to dialogue with them in order to come to an understanding of one another's ideas or opinions. Heavens knows we could all use some *conversion*. *Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily* (#7). DO IT!

Monologue replaces dialogue in their conversations. Any of us might feel "right" on occasion. It becomes problematic if it extends to everything that people share. Something of community life suffers when individuals so dominate discussions that people stop sharing. That is never something to be praised. In a Charley Brown cartoon, Lucy may be a prime example of an opinionated person. However,



when we do have accurate information, we share it, gifting another person with loving concern. We leave the door open to dialogue so that understanding can develop between us. Enough said!

But if we make judgments we also need to listen to these

words from *The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (*Gaudium et Spes*) - Vatican II:

*We should also have respect and love for those who think differently than we do in social, political, or even religious matters. In fact, the more deeply we understand others, the more we can dialogue with them, seeking understanding. This is not to say we should accept untruth as truth, or meanness as goodness. But the people whom we believe to be in untruth are dignified nonetheless, and we teach that only God can make judgment in the end. God alone is the searcher of the human heart, and we should not make judgments about the internal guilt of anyone. To the contrary, we are taught by Jesus to love even those we consider our enemies.*

*Gaudium et Spes* - Vatican II - Paragraph 28  
*Vatican II in Plain English* - Wm Huebsch - Vol 2 - Page 146

Franciscans accept this need for understanding. We choose to help one another discover what most clearly reflects the Gospel. As we love one another we give a healthy example of the heart of the Gospel - *Love one another as I have loved you!* Seeking the truth together helps us avoid creating obstacles that come with too much "know-it-all-ism."

*If we are to serve, if we are to minister, we have to get 'right' inside. And so let us pray: Spirit, touch me. Touch me with your grace. Touch me with your wisdom. Touch me with your love so that I can help somebody, so that I can serve somebody, so that I can bless somebody. Be the bridge over troubled waters so that I can be the balm in Gilead, be the hands of Jesus stretched out to heal.*

*In My Own Words* - Thea Bowman FSPA - Page 49

*... they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue (listening and sharing), trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.*

OFS Rule - #19

not, why not?

Answers to some questions can be found in the OFS Constitutions (Articles 91.2d / 85.1, 2, / 40.2, .3, / 88.1, .2, .3 / 90.1, .2, .3, .4 / 42.3) National Statutes (Articles 19.1 - 6 / 16.1 - 4) {cf. *The Essential Documents of the SFO*} Other answers will come from your own heart or through dialogue with OFS members!

## Young People

Ministry with young people is an opportunity to build relationships. Their energy, enthusiasm and willingness to stand up for what they believe is a gift to us. Collaboration offers experiences of love at work. Listen to this experience of a young woman who missioned in Ecuador:

*As a result of the trip, I am stronger, braver, more thoughtful, more intentional, more simplistic, more grateful, more inspired, and most importantly, happier - happier than I have ever been in my life. ... The Ecuadoreans, through their selfless actions, devout faith, and immense gratitude, have taught me more than any book ever could. They see us, the volunteers, as an extraordinary gift from God, but I see them as the truly extraordinary gift. In simple ways they showed me the meaning of life and what is really important.*

With permission from *Jane*

My cup runneth over because Jane is my nieces' grand-daughter.



Young people, and Franciscans who minister with them, deal with many issues. It may be demanding or frustrating. It can also

be a delightful experience to be present to the love and concern expressed by young people and Franciscans in real life.

Faithful, loving Franciscans, good listeners, and understanding adults who care about young people, can stimulate similar qualities in one another. Ministry with young people is not simply a way to bring people to the OFS. Together we bring the Gospel to people so that, collaborately, we help to build our world and Church to become a better place in which people can live.