

EQUALITY

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Perhaps one of the most frequent statements I hear as Formation Director for our Fraternity is “I just don’t think I am worthy enough, good enough, holy enough, to be a Secular Franciscan.” When I hear those comments, I don’t quite know what to say, except “If you are perfect, you are probably NOT meant to be a Secular Franciscan!”

St. Francis was all about humility, and frequently commented and reminded his brothers of just how unworthy he was. If we were perfect, we would have no further spiritual journey to pursue, no need of conversion, because we are already right where we “think” we need to be in our lives. But as I was once told many years ago, the minute you become “comfortable” in your spiritual journey, that is when you must seek that deeper conversion, because being comfortable means a stagnation of soul and spirit. Whether we are theologians, sedentary as invalids or resigned to a life of monastic seclusion, there is always room for growth in the Lord. He has great promise for all of us, in our own individual state of life.

It is out of our knowledge of being imperfect that we can become perfect in the Lord by His grace and by always seeking to become like Christ in His thoughts and in His deeds. As we realize our need for additional conversion, that we are not perfect, that we are truly “minors” as Francis called himself and his brothers, the more emphatic our efforts will be to reach that destiny of receiving the graces we need that will polish the virtues that make us holy.

We also need to remember that being a Secular Franciscan does not elevate us to sainthood at our Profession! We are “minors”; we are all united as brothers and sisters with the rest of the world, sinners as well as saints. One of St. Francis’s key virtues was humility. Therefore, we desire to be humble, always with the knowledge that we are striving for perfection until we meet Our Savior. In the Gospel of Matthew 9:12, when Jesus was questioned about eating with the tax collectors and sinners, He said “I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.” We are certainly doing the Lord’s work the most when we reach out to those who are in most need. And among those in need are our brothers and sisters in our own Fraternity, for we all need the growth that can be nourished by each other.

In our imperfections, our unworthiness, we grow by inspiring each other with our charism of joy. We grow and share our charisms when we pray for and with them in times of sorrow, by assisting in business matters, by just being available to a brother or sister who has the same spirit as Francis. I have been very inspired by our newest members in formation because

they are excited and spiritually hungry for a closer walk with Jesus in the manner of Francis. I have been very inspired as well by our members who have been Franciscans for a very long time. I gain much from their wisdom, experience and knowledge of all things Franciscan.

Francis always tried to impress upon the friars by personal example and silent teaching, not by speaking theologically. As a matter of fact, his main study and source of inspiration was the Bible, specifically the Gospels. However, he saw great promise in all his brothers, whether they were learned or not. Let us all remember to encourage and inspire one another as equals, all striving towards the same goal, a life with Jesus both here on earth and eternally. Praise be Jesus Christ, now and forever.