

**WHO DO WE SAY
WE ARE?**

*"Let them be meek, peaceful, modest, gentle, and
humble." St. Francis--Later Rule*

A Reflection on being a Secular Franciscan

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Ask group—who do we say we are? In words not long sentences!

Now let's see what our Rule says...

According to our Rule

- We are followers of the gospel. (Art. 4)
- We are seekers of Christ (Art. 5)
- We are witnesses and instruments of Christ's mission (Art. 6)
- We are penitential people seeking daily conversion (Art. 7)
- We are prayerful and contemplative (Art. 8)
- We are givers of ourselves...(Art. 9)



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Going from Gospel to Life and life to the Gospel is not just a saying. We need to read the Gospel seriously and see how it applies to our lives.

Following what Jesus asks in the Gospel is not particularly easy because it requires risk. We might have to disagree with some of our friends and family. Look what happened to Jesus himself!

Seekers of Christ—does the Communion on our tongues lead us to open our hearts to Christ and to others?

Do we seek Jesus in our brothers and sisters—even in those who appear not to “deserve” it?

We proclaim Christ's mission through our words and actions—we need to THINK about what we say to others, what we post online.

We are the “brothers and sisters of penance”...this is the hallmark of the Secular Franciscan. We are on a road and the fuel that propels us is DAILY CONVERSION. Everything we say and do should be transforming us to be more like Christ. A little each day. If not, we have wandered off into the weeds.

Eucharist, daily prayer—liturgy of the hours—spending time with God—allowing the Holy Spirit to act on us and in us—give us softened hearts. The Trinity is the perfect example of RELATIONSHIP in love. This love is given to us through the Holy Spirit. But, we must actively ask and listen for His presence in our lives. How? Take time out for prayer and quiet time with God.

We are (or should be) willing to give of ourselves. But do we give as Jesus gave, as Mary his mother gave?—This is a self-emptying—it's not a giving that asks for thanks or waits for recompense.

According to our Rule



- We are detached from possessions and power (Art. 11)
- We are pure of heart (Art. 12)
- We are accepting of others (Art. 13)
- We are promoters of justice (Art. 15)
- We are peacemakers (Arts. 17 and 19)
- We are lovers of all creatures and all creation (Art. 18)

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We simplify our material needs. But not only that—we are detached from our own opinions and agendas—We allow ourselves to listen to others even when we don't agree with what they are saying. We listen to others with empathy. If we are “joiners” we may need to detach from some of our activities which may choke off our spiritual lives.

Pure of Heart Clear-sighted, willing to deal with reality in a faith-filled way

Seeing the presence of God in all

- Purity of intention - Open to God—ready to be filled with God's presence—this is all they desire
- Speech is honest-without duplicity Doesn't leave a trail of criticism, cynicism and selfishness behind them

Gentle and courteous spirit—accept all people as a gift from God—

we are joyful and place ourselves on an equal basis with all people, especially the lowly

In the forefront of promoting justice, This is difficult we tend to lose sight of what is being asked of us because of the distraction of politics.

Sometimes we need to close our ears and open our hearts to see what is needed.

Those who are activists and are very into making changes may need to soften their approach sometimes. BE GENTLE!

How do I reach out to the members of my fraternity and reach out to others—especially those who are deemed unworthy. (Lepers, the Samaritan woman etc.)

Peacemakers—what does this mean? Does this mean hiding from controversy?

No! It means being flexible like the young branch that bends instead of breaks. We realize that not everyone agrees with us. They have a right to express themselves too.

Lovers of all creatures and creation—no matter what your politics, as Franciscans, we are called to be stewards of the environment. We must do what we can to love the earth and its creatures
If we meditate on our Rule, we also need to see where we need to make daily changes in our lives.
We need to be TRANSFORMED

How do others see us?

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How do others see us?

- St. Teresa of Ávila, gives us food for thought:

"Christ has no body now but mine. He prays in me, works in me, looks through my eyes, speaks through my words, works through my hands, walks with my feet and loves with my heart."

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How do others see us?

- “Communication has the power to build bridges, to enable encounter and inclusion, and thus to enrich society. How beautiful it is when people select their words and actions with care, in the effort to avoid misunderstandings, to heal wounded memories and to build peace and harmony.”

(Pope Francis-Message for World Communications Day 2016).



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Build up, don't tear down

Collaborate and bring together instead of separating . We seek BOTH/AND solutions, not EITHER/OR

Be gentle in our words and actions—we can be direct without wounding others

We seek to heal not rub salt in wounds

Rather than stirring the pot, seek common ground

THIS TAKES WORK!

Franciscan Pledge:

Commitment to **Civility in Discourse**

- **F**acilitate a forum for difficult discourse.
- **R**espect the dignity of all people.
- **A**udit myself.
- **N**eutralize inflamed conversations
- **C**ollaborate with others
- **I**dentify common ground
- **S**upport efforts



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- and acknowledge that all dialogue can lead to new insight and mutual understanding
- especially the dignity of those who hold an opposing view.
- and utilize terms or a vocabulary of faith to unite or reconcile rather than divide conflicting positions
- by presuming that those with whom we differ are acting in good faith.
- and recognize that all human engagement is an opportunity to promote peace.
- such as similar values or concerns and utilize this as a foundation to build upon.
- to clean up the provocative language by calling policymakers to their sense of personal integrity.

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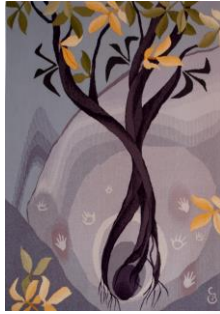
How do others see us?

"By their fruits you will know them." Matt 7:16

The Holy Spirit will guide us:

- The fruits of the Holy Spirit
(Gal. 5:22-23)

***JOY, PEACE, PATIENCE, KINDNESS,
GENEROSITY, FAITHFULNESS,
GENTLENESS, AND SELF-CONTROL***



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When we think about how others see us, as always, the Holy Spirit can guide us in the right direction.

If we are following our Rule, the Gospels and Franciscan spirituality, the **FRUITS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT** will become apparent in us.

When these fruits are in full bloom, we know that the Spirit has been working in us and that we have been open to Him.

The seeds have been planted by the Spirit and we nourish them throughout our lives as we seek daily conversion.

As Franciscans these are particularly important to us because they encompass the qualities called for in our Rule.

Examples:

Joy: Pope Francis: "Joy adapts and changes, but it always endures" (7). In another place he humorously reminds Christians that we must not constantly look like we are returning from a funeral (10). As a fruit of the Spirit, joy is the lived awareness that God is faithful, loving, and merciful and that he will never leave us orphan. (Joy of the Gospel)

Rejoice and be Glad...

Patience: A truly patient person is such a beautiful witness

Patience allows us to listen to others; It allows us to facilitate rather than control

We nourish others so that they may shine; Patience takes great humility

Self-control: Not saying what we are thinking in the heat of anger or disappointment

Save the draft of the email or post and read it again later after asking the Spirit to proofread

Love:

When we are Generous, kind, loving and gentle, other people are transformed by our example

The gifts of the Spirit are nourished and grow in them because of what they see in us

Others come to know us through...

- How we treat them
- How they see us treat others
- What we say and how we say it (What we post online)
- How we respond to what they say
- What we do to and for others
- How we regard ourselves



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Do we treat others with respect—to their faces and when talking to others? (This is not political correctness!)

Can people tell that I am disappointed with them if they do not agree with my point of view?

Our friends observe how we treat others or talk about others. We can seem to be hypocrites if we talk one way and treat others another way.

If we are on social media, do we make angry and judgmental posts? Highly negative or critical? We need to think about how we sound to others, especially in print because it can seem more extreme.


Do we listen to others with empathy? With an open heart—able to feel what the other person may be feeling.

What are we willing to do for others especially the most poor and outcast. Think of Francis and the leper; Jesus and the Samaritan woman; the woman who was going to be stoned.

Do we have respect for ourselves? Do we become the judge and jury of others?

It seems that the default reaction these days is outrage or just plain rage

Who we are...




- Our Seraphic Father St. Francis was a great communicator in word and example.
- He reminds us that sometimes it takes great humility to listen to someone with whom we might not agree or someone who might be criticizing us.

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Who we are..



- We are willing to reveal ourselves in humility and simplicity (lack of pretense)
- We are willing to listen (put aside personal agendas)
- We are poor (We are willing to trust one another and God)
- We don't always have to have the answer (we are servant leaders)


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In the new Apostolic Exhortation: "Rejoice and Be Glad," Pope Francis says: "The Beatitudes are like a Christian's identity card. So if anyone asks, 'What must I do to be a good Christian?', the answer is clear." We are called to reflect this in our lives as Christians and as Franciscans. Pope Francis says that the words "blessed" or "happy" in the beatitudes can be a synonym for "holy." If we are faithful to God and his word by our self-giving, we gain true happiness.

Who we are

- We are willing to share creative ideas and life with the fraternity
- We are willing to be present to our brothers and sisters in fraternity
- We are willing to witness to the Gospel through word, example and outreach to others.



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We Can Always Do Better

Daily Conversion


- How can we improve the manner in which we treat and communicate with others? (Both in our fraternities and in the world.)
- How am I transformed through my life as a Secular Franciscan? (Changed into something better)
- Through my words and actions, do others know that I am a Franciscan? Do they even realize that I am a Christian?



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Inspiration:
FUN Manual
Franciscan Journey
Joy of the Gospel, Pope Francis
Gaudete et Exsultate, Pope Francis
Called to Follow Christ by Benet A. Fonck, OFM
Breath of God by Fr. Dave Pivonka, TOR

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We have talked about who we are supposed to be; and how people see us.

Our visioning—to become more visible in positive ways

Wall Street Journal article

Website

Facebook page etc

Now we introduce our region YouTube Channel