

Lady Poverty Region Ongoing Formation

Live the Treasure! Celebrating 40 Years of Our Rule!

Article 22

The local fraternity is to be established canonically. It becomes the basic unit of the whole Order and a visible sign of the Church, the community of love. This should be the privileged place for developing a sense of Church and the Franciscan vocation and for enlivening the apostolic life of its members.

Food for thought:

"We must always keep in mind that the local fraternity is the basic unit of the Order. None of us would be Secular Franciscans without our being professed into a local fraternity. As Scripture tells us, all members are necessary for the body to function; so all members of the local fraternity are necessary to allow the fraternity to function properly. The fraternity serves several needs for its members: prayer, formation, fellowship, encouragement, and business. Note the placement of business in this listing; so should it be in the amount of time given to each. Concerning our time of prayer and Gospel living, Fr. Cantelamessa, OFM Cap., preacher to the Papal household, when speaking to the Franciscans gathered in Rome to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Primitive Rule, offered this caution: At our gatherings, we should set aside time....'during the liturgical prayer itself when allowed, to have moments of real spiritual sharing among brothers and sisters. Otherwise, there is the danger that in our communities we share everything except our faith and our experience of Jesus. We talk about anything, except about him.' Remember, we do not come to fraternity to be Franciscans. We come to fraternity to be fed so we can go out into the world and share our Franciscan spirit with others." Teresa Baker, OFS, FUN Manual, The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order.

Pope John Paul II addressed the international chapter of Secular Franciscans in 2002: *"The Church expects from the SFO, one and only, a great service in the cause of the kingdom of God in the world of today. The Church desires that your Order should be a model of organic, structural and charismatic unit on all levels, so as to present itself to the world as "a community of love." The Church expects from you...a courageous and consistent testimony of Christian and Franciscan life, leaning towards the construction of a more fraternal and gospel world for the realization of the Kingdom of God..."*

"You Secular Franciscans, by vocation, live belonging to the Church and to society as inseparable realities. Therefore, you are asked, above all else, to bear personal witness before all in the environment in which you live; "in your family life; in your work; in your joys and sufferings; in your associations with all men and women, brothers and sisters of the same Father; in your presence and participation in the life of society; in your fraternal relationships with all creatures..."

"In virtue of your profession, the Rule and General Constitutions must represent for each one of you the reference point for everyday experience, on the basis of a specific vocation."

Questions for meditation and discussion:

1. How do you spend time within the fraternity gathering challenging each other to live the Gospel?
2. What does "fraternity" mean to you?
3. How does the Secular Franciscan Order demonstrate its role in the Catholic Church today?

At the microphone: List 3 ways that your fraternity life strengthens your vocation.