

# TOR RULE

The Spirit of Prayer

## Work on the TOR Rule

- Between 1969 -1979 4 drafts were prepared: Dutch, French, from Brussels and the Madrid Document. In 1979 in the USA “Go to my Brethren” was produced.
- In 1979, in Assisi, a supervisory group and an organisational team were formed. They met in 1980 and work continued with meetings of a designated work group, 1980-2. Rule approved 1982

The 4 fundamental values are:

Penance – Biblical *metanoia*

Poverty

Minority (humility)

Contemplative Prayer

Fraternity/community is regarded not as a value, but as the social reality of committed relationships in which we live out our gospel witness

The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis and Commentary  
Page 35

The TOR Rule is largely in the words of St Francis, now easily accessible as a result of many years of Franciscan scholarship. It is a spiritual document, not a set of rules or regulations.

The TOR Franciscans claim “to follow the gospel spirit of Francis as he first shared it with the townspeople of Assisi. The specific charism of our Third Order is continuous conversion.” Ibid Pages 35-6

For Francis biblical *metanoia* has 3 elements:

Acknowledge God (In creation, In God's goodness and in the ministry of Jesus)

Adore God with whole life, prayerfully, in purity of heart, poverty and obedience

Serve God as Jesus taught

As a Community:

Living in Obedience – for fraternal, communal life – to faith, Christ, Gospel, Church, minister and one another.

Formation – Call from God – fraternal discernment; seeking radical and complete self-giving to God in this way of life. This means total conversion.

Counter cultural: dress and in a simple way of life. Commitment is to fraternal life, without attachment in living poverty, the minister is at the heart of the community. This life leads to chaste union with Jesus Christ, through the Spirit. The community's work manifests God's love for neighbour.



## The Spirit of Prayer:

“The purpose of all Franciscan prayer is to give God ceaseless praise and thanksgiving for all God has done and does in creation and in our re-creation in Christ” Franciscan contemplative prayer is Trinitarian and is Incarnational. It embraces all creation.

“The created world is the expression of God’s goodness and the theatre of God’s redemptive love for us. Because we are made in God’s image, it is possible to seek union with God as we do God’s will. Thus, the Franciscan does not flee the world in order to ‘escape’ God, but seeks immersion in its sacramental reality.”

The Gospel should be in all hearts and the communities seeks to approach the Sacrament with humility and reverence. Brothers and sisters seek ever more to be transformed into Christ, crucified because of love for us.

Practical acts of contrition and penance lead to a simplification of life and a spirit of humility. A life of chastity is designed to help consecrate the innermost self to the Lord.

# Sources for Spirit of Prayer

- ER 23:8, 11
- ER 22:29-30
- ER 23:8
- ER 23. 1
- Cant Cr 3
- 2 Lt F 3
- ER 20:5
- Ep Ord12 -13

# Spirit of Prayer contd

- Lt Clergy 1
- Test 12
- Adm 23.3
- 2Lt F 25
- Adm 19:2
- ER 23:9
- 2 LtF 11-14

# The Spirit of Prayer

- Everywhere and in each place, and in every season and each day, the brothers and sisters are to have a true and humble faith. From the depths of their inner life let them love, honor, adore, serve, praise, bless and glorify our most high and eternal God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The sisters and brothers whom the Lord has called to the life of contemplation (Mk 6:31), with a daily renewed joy, should manifest their special dedication to God and celebrate the Father's love for the world. It was He who created and redeemed us, and by His mercy alone shall save us.



Since the sisters and brothers are to be totally conformed to the Gospel, they should reflect and keep in their hearts the words of Our Lord Jesus Christ who is the word of the Father, as well as the words of the Holy Spirit which "are spirit and life" (Jn 6:63).

Let them participate in the sacrifice of Our Lord Jesus Christ and receive His Body and Blood with great humility and reverence remembering the words of the Lord: "He who eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood has eternal life" (Jn 6:54). Moreover, they are to show the greatest possible reverence and honor for the most sacred name, written words and most holy Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ through whom all things in heaven and on earth have been brought to peace and reconciliation with Almighty God (Jn 6:63).

Whenever they commit sin the brothers and sisters, without delay, are to do penance interiorly by sincere sorrow and exteriorly by confessing their sins to a priest. They should also do worthy deeds that manifest their repentance. They should fast and always strive to be simple and humble, especially before God. They should desire nothing else but our Savior, who offered Himself in His own Blood as a sacrifice on the altar of the Cross for our sins, giving us example so that we might follow in His footsteps.

Minority/humility

*Metanoia* leads to involvement with the little ones – marginalised, helpless, unwanted, those in need of various sorts, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, bringing about. the Kingdom of God.

Work serves those in need and also provides the means for the community to survive. It provides means to give to those in need where workers earn more than is necessary. The community takes an attitude of servanthood that is not judgmental in a spirit of joyfulness.

# Poverty

For Francis and Clare following Christ meant choosing poverty and living among the poor. Poverty of heart - our powerlessness to save ourselves and acknowledging God wills our salvation, God wants us to return to God.

God is all good and we can only claim our limitations and our sinfulness. Material poverty means depending on God, uncluttered and converted. The helpless poor are closest to God. Today rather than rejecting ownership the desire is to foster freedom from attachment and proprietary instincts. Desired also is to be non-judgemental, as judgement belongs to God.

# Extracts from the OFS Rule of 1979

- Secular Franciscans should seek to encounter the living and active presence of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church and in Liturgical activity.
- United by their vocation as brothers and sisters of penance, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the Gospel itself calls Conversion



# Contd

- Human nature makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.
- As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do.
- By uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will in the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfil the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor, crucified Christ, witnessing to him even in difficulties and persecution.

## Contd

- As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, Secular Franciscans should, with a gentle and courteous spirit accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.
- A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.

## The Nature of the OFS

- **This is a summary of the Franciscan mission:**
- **“Rebuild the house of the Lord and strive for a more perfect observance of the Gospel according to their state of life and according to Franciscan spirituality.”**

From '*being*' flows '*doing*', the *mission*. The fundamental mission of anyone seeking conformity with Christ: *to proclaim Christ*, to pass on the urgency of God's love which we ourselves have discovered and which has changed our lives. The meaning of '*to evangelise*': to communicate Christ, to bear witness to him, to make him present through our lives and our proclamation

The SFO is a group of faithful evangelically committed in their secular condition of life for a response in fullness to the call to follow Christ, humble, poor and crucified as Francis did. Like the other Franciscan Orders, it aims to help the Church in its mission of salvation, spreading the Gospel message of repentance/conversion and the Kingdom.

The fraternity is a place where people grow in their Christian faith and understanding of the Franciscan spirit. Members support one another in their individual apostolate, in each member's specific role in repairing the Church, and by being ready to respond in any way we can to the needs of the times

The local fraternity is a source of encouragement, a place where members can support one another, bound by a true spirit of fraternity. It is a space where people can share their experience, their faith and life experiences. Infirm/isolated members should be remembered and kept in communication throughout their lives.

- The SFO is an association of the Christian Faithful, it is universal, constituted by the faithful and erected under the personal authority of the Pontiff.
- As a Public Association, it enjoys the privilege of spiritual and pastoral assistance through the Franciscan First Order and TOR (male and clerical). Fraternities are under the jurisdiction of the diocese concerning apostolic activities.
- It is autonomous and united, lives in fullness its secularity, sharing the common Franciscan mission.
- The three characteristics of autonomy, unity and secularity are essential.



# Relationship between Spiritual Assistants and OFS

- Characteristics of the relationship:
- A relationship of equality, complementarity, intimate and reciprocal life-giving communion, mutual assistance and collaboration enabling an exchange of gifts and experiences between the brothers and sisters to carry out the Franciscan mission, entrusted to Francis

- A relationship of necessity because the Church has entrusted spiritual and pastoral assistance to Franciscans rather than through the ministry of the Bishop, in view of fraternity and the solidarity of the mission of the Franciscan family.
- A relationship of obedience and safeguard – the *altius moderamen* have the specific roles of ensuring fidelity to the charism, communion with the Church and union within the Franciscan family.

# Obedience for members of the OFS

- Obedience to the Gospel
- Obedience to the Church
- Obedience to one's conscience
- Obedience to the Rule, not another person.

# Is it possible?

- To reach through us every man and woman in the world, everything that exists
- God is available to and for us in Baptism, in the Eucharist, through the Holy Spirit. Might God desire to touch all humanity through us?
- Secular means we are immersed in the world and the conditions of everyday life. Accepting this may make us think about the balance required between contemplation and action. Might religious observance become an opportunity to flee from the world?

# Some thoughts on being a secular Franciscan

- It means accepting the past with gratitude, living the present with passion, preparing the future with hope.
- Turn to Francis to understand our vocation: St Francis specialised in nothing
- He placed himself at the disposal of all
- He, in the first place, sought God in order to find himself.