

Saint Francis Fraternity

Ongoing Formation

January 2014

To begin the New Year, we will be examining SFO Rule 11. Please review the following texts to prepare for our January gathering.

And please remember, as always, to note anything, in any of the readings, that you find inspiring, puzzling, or would just like to talk about when we meet.

Rule 11 of the Secular Franciscan Order

Trusting the Father, Christ chose for Himself and His mother a poor and humble life, even though He valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children.

Thus, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.

General Constitutions of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 15

1. *Rule 11* Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to live the spirit of the Beatitudes and, in a special way, the spirit of poverty. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes them to promote a more just distribution of wealth.
2. Secular Franciscans, who must provide for their own families and serve society by means of their work and material goods, have a particular manner of living evangelical poverty. To understand and achieve it requires a strong personal commitment and the stimulation of the fraternity in prayer and dialogue, communal review of life, and attentiveness to the instructions of the Church, and the demands of society.
3. Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners.

They should take a firm position against consumerism and against ideologies and practices which prefer riches over human and religious values and which permit the exploitation of the human person.

The National Formation Manual, For Up to Now (FUN), Chapter 12: “The Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order” by Teresa V. Baker, SFO

This article of the Rule calls us to begin where Francis did, trusting in God, for without this trust we can do nothing. Francis chose exactly what Christ chose and nothing more: he chose a poor and humble life. Are we called to give up everything as Francis did? No, but we are to give up our inordinate possession of things. The rich young man, whom Jesus looked upon with love, turned from Jesus because his possessions were many. Evangelical poverty demonstrates confidence in the Father, creates interior freedom, and disposes [Secular Franciscans] to promote a more just distribution of wealth (GC 15.1). In the Beatitudes “poverty” is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to communicate and share both material and spiritual goods, not by coercion but out of love, so that the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others (CCC 2546).

Francis told his brothers to take nothing for the journey, to be pilgrims and strangers. In Francis’ time, there was a law for pilgrims and Francis wanted it to be in place for his sons: “to be sheltered under someone else’s roof, to travel in peace, and to thirst for their homeland (2C 59). How graced our life would be if this were “our rule,” our guidance for life in this world. Nothing is ours; all is to be shared.

REFLECTION

- Our Secular Franciscan life calls us to a poverty of detachment; do you own your possessions or do your possessions own you?
- What stands in the way of your spending greater time with God?
- What obstructs your way when it comes to caring for your neighbor?
- Which Beatitude places the greatest challenge before you? Why?

Additional questions for meditation and discussion

- Sometimes, our station in life requires us to be in a position of authority. Assuming that being in this situation is in accordance with God’s will, how do Secular Franciscans continue to “strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for ... power?”
- How does the Secular Franciscan’s pursuit of a poverty of detachment differ from that of other branches of the Franciscan family?
- What benefits are obtained by adopting a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods?