

Saint Francis Fraternity

Ongoing Formation

July 2014

Article 4

The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of St. Francis of Assisi who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people.

Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly.

Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to gospel.

Every Secular Franciscan should become "Francis all over again" in this respect, contemplating and living the humanness of Christ, the man, and his words. This lived experience of Christ within us is shown in what we do, what we say, what we are, and, therefore, in what we believe. In a word, it is that full-circle cycle from "reading" the gospel with all our being to living it with all our potential, for Jesus, our "Way" is vividly portrayed on every page of the gospel. If in the ordinary things of life we are motivated to purposeful action by visualizing our goals, by developing a burning desire to attain them and having confidence that we will, then encountering Jesus in the gospel as our model, as our source of energy and as the pledge of our hope, makes a truly gospel-oriented life possible. We live as he did, we take on his mission. We share his Good News with others.

~ Benet A. Fonck, OFM, *Called to Follow Christ*

Francis' highest intention, his chief desire, his uppermost purpose was to observe the holy Gospel in all things and through all things and, with perfect vigilance, with all zeal, with all the longing of his mind and all the fervor of his heart, "to follow the teaching and the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ." He would recall Christ's words through persistent meditation and bring to mind His deeds through the most penetrating consideration. The humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupied his memory particularly, to the extent that he wanted to think of hardly anything else.

~ Thomas of Celano, *First Life of St. Francis*

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Questions for meditation and discussion

- Can you give an example from your life of going from gospel to life and from life to gospel?
- How can we help each other as brothers and sisters in the fraternity to go from gospel to life and from life to gospel?
- The world we live in is very different than the world Francis lived in. It can be a real challenge for us to “recall Christ's words through persistent meditation” given everything that is happening around us all of the time. What ways have you found to make this practice more possible?
- Do you think it's correct to say that the first paragraph of this article contains a complete summary of the entire rule? Why or why not?