

Saint Francis Fraternity

Ongoing Formation

August 2014

Article 5

Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of St. Francis, who often said, "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except His most holy body and blood," should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.

Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future he endured the cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of Gods throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage.

~ Hebrews 12:2-3

The Lord gives us the grace to fulfill any task he puts before us. If he has called us to be Franciscans for the Church and the world by observing the gospel, we are certain that he provides the means to accomplish this vocation. One of the primary ways that his grace is manifested to us is through his own presence which is always present in various forms for us to encounter and respond to. Through such interaction with the living and active person of Christ, our relationship with him becomes more intense, our commitment to the gospel is deepened, and our three-fold task of change of heart, community-building, and evangelization become more firmly our way of life.

~ Benet A. Fonck OFM, Called to Proclaim Christ

In the Secular Franciscan quest nothing is more important than to seek out the presence of our Lord Jesus. This presence is very real; it guides and sustains us on our journey to the Kingdom. More than that, it can make us know that the Kingdom is here and now; that, since we entered upon eternal life at the moment of our

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conception, nothing can destroy that life and our full participation in the Kingdom is veiled only by the facts and circumstances of the daily lives We lead in our secular milieu.

It is indeed in this world about us that we must, then, seek his presence – it is simply the environment, the setting, where we meet with our brothers and sisters, where we seek to live the Gospel life, where we join together to make his Church, where we gather for liturgical activity and its culmination in the Eucharist.

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Enthusiasm for these encounters is engendered by the sense of the living Christ among us. Can we fully explain this sense of presence of the Lord? No, not more than could the Fathers of the Church who declared it a holy mystery. But we can live it and be nurtured by it and that is why our Franciscan Rule calls us to seek out Christ's presence – and to seek it wherever we live. We are most fortunate in having the whole world before us and for us. "Secular Franciscans" is a good and honorable name for us.

~ Adelaide N. Sabath, OFS, "To Encounter Christ", *Called to Make Present the Charism*

Questions for meditation and discussion

- Article 5 outlines five places (or four depending on how you count) where Franciscan are to encounter Christ on an ongoing basis. Is there one that you feel particularly drawn to? Is there one that you find difficult. Why do you think that is?
- How does your Franciscan calling help you to encounter Christ? How does our fraternity help.
- Can you think of any time when the living and active person of Christ was especially present to you in:
 - Your brothers and sisters
 - Sacred Scripture
 - The Church
 - Liturgical activity
 - The Eucharistic
- How might Francis have answered the same question?