

# **Saint Francis Fraternity**

## **Ongoing Formation**

### **August 2015**

#### **Article 9**

**The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to His every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.**

#### **Food for thought**

*Mary, Mother of Jesus, is the model of listening to the Word and of faithfulness to vocation; we, like Francis, see all the gospel virtues realized in her.*

*The brothers and sisters should cultivate intense love for the most holy virgin, imitation, prayer, and filial abandonment. They should manifest their own devotion with expressions of genuine faith, in forms accepted by the Church.*

*Mary is the model of fruitful and faithful love for the entire ecclesial community.*

*Secular Franciscans and their fraternities should seek to live the experience of Francis, who made the Virgin the guide of his activity. With her, like the disciples at Pentecost, they should welcome the Spirit to create a community of love.*

*~ General Constitution of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 16.1,2*

*His assiduous meditation urged him to give her an astonishing title; he would recall how Mary lived on alms for many periods of her life, so he named her the "little poor one," the "Poverella." If we remember the real conditions of her life, her frequent traveling and moving, we will realize to what extent her life was poor, itinerant, suffering. Though queen in the eyes of God, she was the Wife of a humble carpenter and lived in a remote and despised village. By this example she teaches us to put our values not in a place or in a function, but in inner dispositions..*

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

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*Toward the Mother of Jesus he was filled with an inexpressible love, because it was she who made the Lord of majesty our brother. He sang special Praises to her, poured out prayers to her, offered her his affections, so many and so great that the tongue of man cannot recount them. But what delights us most, he made her the advocate of the order and placed under her wings the sons he was about to leave that she might cherish them and protect them to the end. Hail, advocate of the poor! Fulfill toward us your office of protectress until the time set by the Father.*

~ *The Second Life of St. Francis by Bl. Thomas of Celano, 198*

*The rule asks Secular Franciscans to express ardent love for Mary by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently. Self-giving is a real characteristic of Christ, and Mary learned it well. It is a difficult task for anyone of us to achieve, but is something we must daily strive to acquire. This article of the rule indicates how Mary became a self-giving person. "She was the humble servant of the Lord open to his every Word and call." With this openness to grace, we, too, can find it possible to imitate her as the rule requires.*

~ Philip Marquard OFM, *Called to Live the Dynamic Power of the Gospel: Commentary on the Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order* (SFO Resource Library)

## **Questions for meditation and discussion**

- What qualities or attributes of Mary most stir you? How do you imitate those qualities/attributes in your daily routines?
- How do you, such as Mary, welcome the Spirit to create a community of love? (SFO Constitutions, Article 16.2) What steps do you take to help your fraternity to be a community of love? What steps would you need to work on more diligently to help your fraternity be a better community of love?
- How do you nourish your spirit in order to serve others more humbly and express your service more deeply?