

SECULAR FRANCISCAN POVERTY

Have on hand: O.F.S. Rule and Catechism

Today we will review our understanding of poverty, one of the very prominent virtues of St. Francis of Assisi. [Covering from the *Rule* – Articles #10; #11; and #12]



Giotto di Bondone:
St. Francis Giving his Mantle to a Poor Man, 1295

Our Opening Prayer:

O God, by whose gift Saint Elizabeth of Hungary recognized and revered Christ in the poor, grant, through her intercession, that we may serve with unflinching charity the needy and those afflicted. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.¹

A.) Let's look at the Rule Participants should take turns reading aloud each of these Articles from our *Rule*: #4a; #7a; and #10 – 12.

POOR in Christ – We remember that St. Francis was called the little poor one, “IL Poverello.”

To quote St. Francis’ biographer Thomas of Celano: “The father of the poor, the poor Francis, conforming

himself to the poor in all things, was distressed to see anyone poorer than himself, not out of any desire for empty glory, but from a feeling of simple compassion. Though he was content with a ragged and rough tunic, he often wished to divide it with some poor person.

“This richest poor man, moved by a great feeling of pity, in order to help the poor in some way, used to approach the rich people of this world during the coldest times of the year, asking them to loan him their cloaks or furs. As they responded even more gladly than the blessed father asked, he used to say to them, ‘I shall accept this from you only on the condition that you never expect to have it returned.’ The first poor man who happened to meet him, he would then clothe with whatever he had received, exulting and rejoicing.

“He was deeply troubled whenever he saw one of the poor insulted or heard a curse hurled at any creature. It happened that a certain brother insulted a poor man begging alms, saying: ‘Are you sure that you are not really rich and just pretending to be poor?’ When Saint Francis, the father of the poor, heard this, he was deeply hurt and he severely rebuked the brother who had said these things. Then he ordered the brother to strip naked in front of the poor man and to kiss his feet, to beg his forgiveness. He used to say: ‘Anyone who curses the poor insults Christ whose noble banner the poor carry, since Christ made himself poor for us in this world.’ That is also why, when he met poor people burdened with wood or other heavy loads, he would offer his own weak shoulders to help them.

“The holy man overflowed with the spirit of charity ...”²

B.) The meaning of “poverty”

POVERTY has several definitions – St. Francis called her Lady Poverty



Giotto di Bondone: Allegory of Poverty, ca. 1330

Q1. Give some definitions of poverty.

Q2. Which definition is being used in our *Rule*?

(After the above is discussed and compared ...)

Poverty may be defined as: **a virtue, a form of penance and conversion, by which we detach ourselves from our possessions for the sake of others in imitation of (following the example of) Jesus Christ.**

(Explain the various elements of this description.)

Poverty is either involuntary (so many around us, due to circumstances of life) or voluntary (by free choice, by pledge, by vow).

You are encouraged to read from the *Catechism*, especially the section Love for the Poor, §2443 – §2449 and §2451 – §2452. (You may want to give some examples of what is written there.)

Q3. Recall and explain examples of people who embraced poverty. For example, Christ/Mary (*Rule*, Article #9); Francis/Clare/Elizabeth of Hungary, and others.

C.) Foundational requirements:

A trust in Divine Providence and concern for others (not selfish).

D.) Examples of what can be done: How do we practice this poverty?

By sharing: - TIME - TALENT - TREASURE

(Remember: When I give of my time, my talent, and/or my treasure, I am giving some of myself!!)

Q4. In what way is this true?

Q5. What priorities have I developed for my Franciscan poverty – of my time, talent, and treasure?

Q6. How do I share myself with and for others in these three areas of my life? Give some specifics.

Q7. How can I do more in these areas of my life?

Q8. How does the monthly Fraternity “fair share” fit into my understanding of poverty and penance?

Q9. How does shopping at second-hand stores (e.g., garage sales/St. Vincent de Paul/Good Will/Salvation Army/etc.) for clothing and furniture show concern for the environment and natural resources?

Q10. What is my attitude toward money? – toward possessions?

Q11. How can I curb my desire to “want more”?

¹ *Roman Missal*, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, November 17 [Patroness of the O.F.S. and the T.O.R.]

² FA:ED, *The Life of Saint Francis, First Book*, 1228-1229, Vol. I, pp. 247-248, Chapter XXVIII, v. 76