

Vital Reciprocity

***The State of Spiritual
Assistance to the SFO in
the USA***

SFO Rule, #1

- The Franciscan family, as one among many spiritual families raised up by the Holy Spirit in the Church, unites all members of the people of God -- laity, religious, and priests - who recognize that they are called to follow Christ in the footsteps of Saint Francis of Assisi.

SFO Rule, #1 (cont)

- In various ways and forms but in life-giving union with each other, they intend to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church.

Valentin Redondo, OFM Conv

on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the SFO Rule:

“The Franciscan Family is composed of the friars of the 1st Order in its different branches, the Poor Clare sisters in their different branches, the TOR (masculine and feminine) and the Secular Franciscan Order.”

**ALL ARE NECESSARY TO
COMPOSE THE FRANCISCAN
FAMILY**

SFO General Constitutions

- The General Constitutions make the living of this life in family more concrete: “Secular Franciscans should seek to live in life giving reciprocal communion with all the members of the Franciscan family.” (GC 98.1)

SFO General Constitutions

- They should be ready to promote common initiatives or participate in them with the religious of the First, Second and Third Orders, with Secular institutes and with other lay ecclesial groups that recognize Francis as a model and inspiration in order to work together to spread the Gospel, remove the causes of marginalization, and serve the cause of peace” (GC, 98.1 cont.)

Life Giving Union

- "Established together as one, we live a reciprocal life, and assume our common co-responsibility according to the message of Francis. The modes and different forms of our lives do not constitute an obstacle; they are a grace of complementarity that allows us to become mutually evangelized. "
Statement of the OFM General Chapter, 2 June, 1979
- Quoted in *Life Giving Union* (earlier edition), page 6

Define "vital reciprocity"

- Offered by Fr. Lester Bach, OFM Cap:

When we speak of a *vital reciprocity* between the 1st Order/TOR and the SFO we are speaking about a *mutual exchange* that is essential to the life of the whole Franciscan family.

Vital reciprocity definition cont.

Our Franciscan family, through a common *mutual exchange* helps promote what is *essential to the life* of our Franciscan charism.

The implications show themselves in the various ways our documents require this mutual relationship.

General Consituions, 89.1

- By virtue of the vital reciprocity between the religious and the secular members of the Franciscan Family and in regard to the responsibilities of major superiors, spiritual assistance to the fraternities of the SFO at all levels must be assured as a fundamental element of communion.

STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SFO

Art. 1

- 1. The spiritual and pastoral care of the SFO, in virtue of its belonging to the same spiritual family, is entrusted by the Church to the Franciscan First Order and the TOR, to whom the Secular Fraternity has been united for centuries.

STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SFO

Art. 1

- 2. Religious and Secular Franciscans in fact, in various ways and forms but in **life-giving union** with each other, aim to make present the charism of their common Seraphic Father in the life and mission of the Church and of society.

STATUTES FOR SPIRITUAL AND PASTORAL ASSISTANCE TO THE SFO

Art. 23

- 2. The local assistant fosters communion within the fraternity and between the fraternity and the First Order or the TOR. In harmony with the local Guardian or Superior, the assistant sees to it that between the religious and the secular fraternities a real **life-giving union** with each other exists. He or she fosters the active presence of the fraternity in the Church and in society.

What the SFO offers

1. The Seculars have given me time and time again an **authentic, vivid and credible witness** to true prayer, simple living, and oneness with the Church.

What the SFO offers (cont.)

2. The Seculars have given me an expanded, but nonetheless real, experience of 'life in fraternity' and 'fraternity in mission.'

What the SFO offers (cont.)

3. The Seculars have provided for me a lived experience of the unity of the Franciscan charism: the complementarity between religious and seculars and between clergy and laity, the collaboration among all parts of the Family to make the charism of Francis and Clare present and operative in the Church...

What the SFO offers (cont.)

4. The Seculars have given me the opportunity for deep appreciation for the secular/lay vocation in the Church and for the great holiness of those called to this way of life; this appreciation leads to hearing/seeing my own story in the story of others, such listening leads to modeling; such modeling moves me toward deeper holiness myself.

Sr. Antonella Perugini in a recent article in *The Franciscan Family*:

"Life-giving union with each other" in the vision of the Poor Clare Sisters,

"I am profoundly convinced that what unites us is quantitatively and qualitatively much more than what distinguishes us from one another; but it is, nevertheless, true that the distinctions do exist and, in their complementing, constitute a reciprocal richness and contributes to making complete and, thus, more authentic, the face of Franciscanism."

