

# NEWS & VIEWS

*If you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging!*



Secular Franciscans for the 21st Century  
Lester Bach OFM Cap - Winter, 2016/17

## THE TIME IS NOW!

**\* Rule 13 - They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.**

OFS Constitutions - 2000 - Article 18.2

### Reflection

Some people in the world seek power in order to dominate others. Tools of domination include: violence of many kinds, lies, hatred and revenge. On the other hand, Franciscans are called to promote visible, positive action. The power of love encourages relationships and concern for people. We build the goal of genuine peace and justice!

Assuredly a prayerful spirit is vital. The OFS Rule, article #14 (Next page), calls us to *take action* to provide effective ways and means to build the Kingdom of God among people.

We are called to *build a more fraternal and evangelical world!* "To build" includes building relationships among people. Contemplation moves us to trust the Trinity as we share ideas, actions, and love. Our lives model the spirit of the Gospel as well as spirit of St. Francis, fulfilling the words of the OFS Rule.

Dialogue (including 'attentive listening') helps move people to conversion as needed. We develop plans to deal with life's issues and create effective means to build the Kingdom of God.

## WORDS TO PONDER

*Every gun that is made, every warship launched, and every rocket fired, signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of laborers, the genius of its scientists and the hopes of its children.*

President Dwight Eisenhower

1953 speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

*God does not dominate our humanity. In Jesus, God embraces it. It is this option for relationship which defines the humility of God. ... Humanity was not created in the image of an autocratic, self-assertive and dictatorial God, but in the image of a relational, humble God. ... to be humble is to glory in the fact that we are created in love and redeemed through love in order to have a loving relationship with the Triune God who created and redeemed us, and with all creatures with whom we were created.*

Circular Letter - October 4, 2005 - General Minister John Corriveau OFM Cap

*One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now. We contribute to a better world only by personally doing good now, with full commitment and wherever we have the opportunity, independently of partisan strategies and programs. The Christian's program - the program of the Good Samaritan, the program of Jesus - is a "heart which sees." This heart sees where love is needed and acts accordingly.*

God is Love (Deus Caritas Est) - Benedict XVI - Paragraph 31.b

***Mindful that they are bearers of peace which must be built up unceasingly, they should seek out ways of unity and fraternal harmony through dialogue, trusting in the presence of the divine seed in everyone and in the transforming power of love and pardon.***

OFS Rule - #19

*Here are some principles I've learned to emphasize before we begin a formal conversation process:*

- \* we acknowledge one another as equals:
- \* we try to stay curious about each other:
- \* we recognize that we need each other's help to become better listeners:
- \* we slow down so we have time to think and reflect:
- \* we remember that conversation is the natural way humans think together:
- \* we expect it to be messy at times.

Turning to One Another - Margaret Wheatley - Page 29

*He who thinks that he is finished is finished. How true. Those who think that they have arrived, have lost their way. Those who think they have reached their goal, have missed it.*

The Genesee Diary - Henri Nouwen

We seek to forgive, understand, and offer attentive listening. Dialogue helps build "relationships" in order to achieve the goals prompted by love!

The OFS Rule #13 and #14 (in the other column on this page) call for qualities that Secular Franciscans are meant to achieve. We are to follow the entire OFS Rule in our lives. The world's situation provides openings for Seculars to implement the OFS Rule as a model for others.

We need to do more than day-dream about a better world. The OFS Rule asks that we **build an evangelical and fraternal world to bring about the Kingdom of God more effectively.** We invest time, energy, forgiveness, social action, love, compassion and hope, while keeping in touch with the Trinity. Both **prayer and action** are needed to live a complete Franciscan life based on the OFS Rule.

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Our Franciscan vocation requires:

1. That we follow the call from the Trinity with a dedicated mind and heart.
2. That the call brings people together in faith and love.
3. That the call moves us to collaborate in bringing peace and justice to people.
4. That the call is realistic, dealing with negative enticements that power, possessions and prestige may offer.
5. That we respond to the call to develop a prayerful contemplative spirit.
6. That the call creates in us an atmosphere of *shalom* (peace) where people are respected, loved, and live in a spirit of hope and gospel peace.
7. That our call moves us to participate in **building** the Kingdom of God.
8. That the call moves us to model gospel love, and opens us to the Holy Spirit, ready to bring positive alternatives to ourselves and the people in our lives.
9. That the call brings good news to people both by life and words. It's our way of being faithful to the OFS Rule.
10. That the call accepts **dialogue** as one means to discover and implement ways to achieve unity.

Cfr. *Seeking a Gospel Life* - Lester Bach OFM Cap  
Pages 113-114 - (The above copy has been revised by the author)

*As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the first-born of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit will accept all people as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ.*

*A sense of community will make them joyful and ready to place themselves on an equal basis with all people, especially with the lowly for whom they shall strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ.*

OFS Rule #13

*Secular Franciscans, together with all people of good will, are called to build a more fraternal and evangelical world so that the kingdom of God may be brought about more effectively. ... let them exercise their responsibilities competently in the Christian spirit of service.*

OFS Rule #14

Here are a few ideas on *discernment*. They are not exhaustive, but can help in its practice. Keep it simple!

- ✦ *Take time to ask the Lord, in prayer, for the gift of knowing his preference for you.* It is his gift, but we need to desire it and pray earnestly for it.
- ✦ *Clarify the question you are seeking to answer.* Concretize the issues you are dealing with. Avoid fuzziness about what you are after. Be patient in your seeking and continue to pray for the Trinity's help.
- ✦ *If needed, seek advice from a competent person.* It helps to list the pros and cons of the situation. What is the advantage if I choose this way? What are the disadvantages? What are the consequences of the choice or choices I make?
- ✦ *Consider the negative side of the issue as well as the positive side.* Consider positive alternatives and be prayerful, placing them before the Trinity.
- ✦ *God has a preference* about what we do with our lives even though he leaves us free. He prefers things that bring us and others to fullness of life. We need a genuine relationship with the Trinity to accept and implement the Trinity's goal for us.
- ✦ *Take time to choose effective decisions* that will bring new life and love to people in ways that reflect the Kingdom of God! Then ACT accordingly!

Lester Bach OFM Cap - Talk at Queen of Angels Retreat,  
Saginaw, MI. - November 1, 1979

*... By their profession they pledge themselves to live the Gospel in the manner of St Francis by means of this Rule approved by the Church.*

OFS Rule #2

*... Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words. ...*

OFS Rule #6

*2. In this spirit of conversion, they should live out their love for the renewal of the Church, which should be accompanied by personal and communal renewal. The fruits of conversion, which is a response to the love of God (Trinity), are the works of charity in the interactions with the brothers and sisters.*

OFS General Constitutions - 2000 - Article #13.2  
Essential documents of the Secular Franciscan Order