

EARLY FRANCISCAN SOURCES

FROM: St. Francis' Rule of 1221 for the Friars Minor

Chapter 7. Work and the Service of Others

The friars who are engaged in the service of lay people for whom they work should not be in charge of money or of the cellar. They are forbidden to accept positions of authority in the houses of their employers, or to take any job which would give scandal or make them lose their own souls. They should be the least and subordinate to everyone in the house.

The friars who have a trade should work at it provided that it is no obstacle to their spiritual progress and can be practiced without scandal. The Psalmist tells us, "You shall eat the fruit of your handiwork; happy shall you be, and favored"(127:2); and St. Paul adds, "If any man will not work, neither let him eat (2 Thes. 3:10). Everyone should remain at the trade and in the position in which he was called. In payment they may accept anything they need, except money. If necessary, they can go for alms like the rest of the friars. They are allowed to have the tools which they need for their trade.

All friars must work hard doing good, as it has been said, "Always be doing something worthwhile; then the devil will always find you busy" (St. Jerome, Ep.125) and "Idleness is the enemy of the soul". (St. Anselm, Ep.49) And so those who serve God should be always busy praying or doing good.

FROM: St. Francis Rule of 1223 for the Friars Minor

Chapter 5. The Manner of Working

The friars to whom God has given the grace of working should work in a spirit of faith and devotion and avoid idleness, which is the enemy of the soul, without however extinguishing the spirit of prayer and devotion, to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. As wages for their labor they may accept anything necessary for their temporal needs, for themselves or their brethren, except money in any form. And they should accept it humbly as is expected of those who serve God and strive after the highest poverty."

FROM: The Testament of Saint Francis, 1226, 20-25

I worked with my own hands, and I am still determined to work, and with all my heart I wish to have all the rest of the brothers work at employment that can be carried out without scandal. Those who do not know how to work should learn, not because they want to get

something for their efforts, but to give good example and to avoid idleness. And should the wages of our work not be given to us, we can turn to God's table and beg alms from door to door. God revealed a form of greeting to me, telling me that we should say, "God give you peace."

FROM: The Rule of Saint Clare, 8:1

The Sisters to whom the Lord has given the grace of working should labor faithfully and devoutly after the Hour of Terce at work which pertains to honesty and the common good.

FROM: First Life of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, 39

During the day those who knew how labored with their hands, staying in the houses of lepers, or in other decent places, serving all humbly and devotedly. They did not wish to exercise any position for which scandal might arise, but always doing what is holy and just, honest and useful, they led all with whom they came in contact to follow their example of humility and patience.

FROM: Second Life of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, 75.

There was a certain brother in a certain place who never went out for alms but always ate more than several together at table. When the saint observed that he was a friend of the belly, one who share the fruits without sharing the labor, he once said to him: "Go your way, brother fly for you want to eat the sweat of your brothers and to do nothing in God's work. You are like brother drone who wants to be first to eat the honey, though he does not do the work of the bees."

FROM: Second Life of St. Francis, Thomas of Celano, 161.

Francis used to say that the lukewarm who did not make themselves acquainted familiarly with work would be quickly vomited forth from the mouth of the Lord. No one could appear idle before him without being corrected by him with a sharp rebuke. For he himself worked and labored with his hands as an example of all perfection, allowing nothing of that greatest gift of time to escape. But he said once: "I want all my brothers to work and to be employed, and those who do not know how should learn some crafts." And he gave this reason: "That we may be less burdensome to men," he said, "and that the heart or tongue may not wander to unlawful things in idleness." But the profit or the reward of labor he did not commit to the free dispositions of the guardian or of the family.

FROM: Major Life of St. Francis, St. Bonaventure, 5:6.

He taught the friars especially to avoid idleness, the root of all evil desires, and he set them an example by curbing his lower nature when it was given to temptation by

practicing continual self-discipline or devoting himself to useful work....If he saw that a friar was standing about idle, waiting to be fed by the labor of others, he called him "Brother Fly," because he detracted from the good done by others and did no good himself, so that he lost the respect and esteem of all. With reference to such friars, the saint once remarked, "I want my friars to work and to be kept busy. If they are idle, their hearts and their tongues will soon be occupied with unlawful subjects."