

“Community” Questions
by Pauline Cahalan

Living in community with all people of the world is our work as daughters and sons of God, as Catholic Christians, and as Franciscans. Since this is already our responsibility as Christians, how does being a Secular Franciscan impact this scriptural charge?

What an amazing opportunity we have when we think about it. In “Called to make Present the Charism” Fr. Benet Fonck, OFM makes note of Christ’s teaching in Mt 25:40. The way we behave toward each member of God’s earthly family we encounter--it is as if we were behaving that same way toward God at that same moment. As Fr. Lester reminded us at the Quinquennial one year ago, God won’t care how many titles or awards we have acquired while we were here, what kind of cars we drove, the value of the homes we lived in, the brands of the clothes we wore, or what our best golf score was. What matters to God is how well we were able to reflect God’s love to others and to accomplish the work God wanted us to do while we were here.

Who are “the lowly” in your community for whom we are to “strive to create conditions of life worthy of people redeemed by Christ”? Are you willing to create circumstances in your life when you have face to face encounters and opportunities to reflect Christ to others less fortunate, or do you just send a check to that charity and stay in your more comfortable cocoon when volunteering? Are people in your workplace treated as if there is some sort of “pecking order” or does each person know by your words and actions that you recognize Christ’s presence equally in each of them?

As Franciscans we have not only our blood relatives to frequently relate to. We are blessed to have all the brothers and sisters of our Franciscan family. Plus we have all the other folks in whatever adventures the world presents us with each day, week, month, and year. Other questions to be asking ourselves about these different relationships are:

1. How well am I relating to my relatives these days?
2. Is it easier for me to be kind to strangers than to be kind to some members of my family?
3. Do I genuinely care about all the members of my fraternity? How do I express this caring to the fraternity members that I don’t know quite so well?
4. Do people in the community where I live know there is a Secular Franciscan presence in that community? If so, how?