



Celebration of the Rule

One Rule, Three Versions

1221

1209

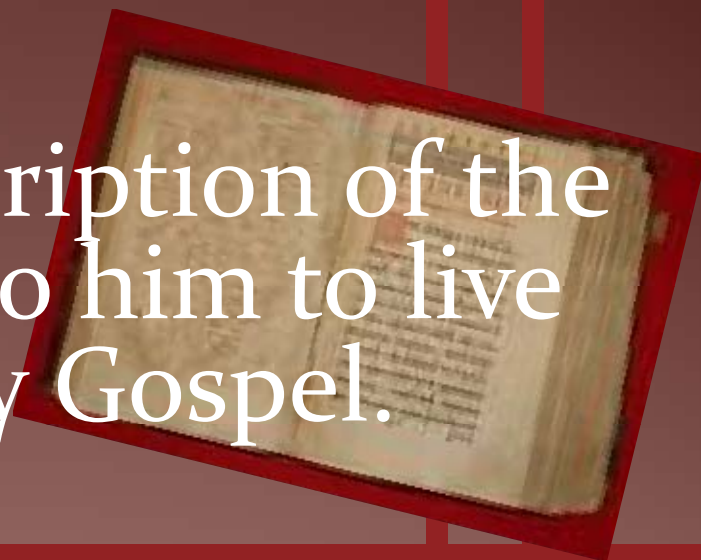
1223

Its Meaning for the Whole Family

Introduction

The Rule

Francis's official description of the charism as revealed to him to live according to the Holy Gospel.



All Franciscan families have the same charism

Fully acknowledging their close relationship with one another and recognizing in them the same charism, the friars are always to have great care and concern for the nuns of the Second Order (OFM GC 56).



Insofar as necessary and possible, the Ministers and Guardians are to strive to offer spiritual support to the brothers and sisters of the Third Order Regular (OFM GC 59).



The First Order has been entrusted with the care of the Secular Franciscan Order. This displays the spirit of St. Francis in the world, it shares in the life, witness and mission the Franciscan charism and it makes its own necessary and complementary contribution to the fullness of that charism (OFM GC 60).



Conventual Constitutions

- Moreover, the unity of the Franciscan spirit in the First and Second Orders, in Franciscan congregations, and also in the Secular Franciscan Order should be fostered so that the seraphic charism may flourish in all its fullness (114:2).



Capuchin Constitutions

- Within the ambit of the Franciscan family, the Secular Franciscan Fraternity or Order occupies a special place that both shares and promotes its authentic spirit. It should be esteemed as necessary for the fullness of the Franciscan charism (95).



The SFO General Constitutions

- There are many spiritual families in the Church with different charisms. Among these families, the Franciscan Family, which in its various branches recognizes St. Francis of Assisi as its father, inspiration and model, must be included (GC 1:2; Rule 1).



Versions of SFO Rule

- Penitents connect with Francis and friars as they introduce themselves as “Penitents from Assisi”
- Earlier Version (1209-1215) dates closest to 1209 Version of Rule and contains 34 biblical references
- 1220--expands emphasis on Gospel way of life; 75 biblical references
- Doctrinal orthodoxy of utmost importance to Francis—emphasis placed on the Incarnation, humanity of Christ
- 1221-Honorius III promulgates official approbation of a Rule for the Third Order of St. Francis called *Memoriale propositi* that is canonical, but it does not reflect the thought of Francis



Last Four Versions of SFO Rule

- 1228 Gregory IX (Hugolino) gives Penitents a set of statutes that were not specifically Franciscan or biblical
- 1289 Rule by Nicholas IV
- 1883 Rule by Leo XIII—frames as a sodality, a spirituality apart from a way of life
- 1978 Paul VI approves Rule that reflects fruits of Franciscan research and theology of Vatican II.



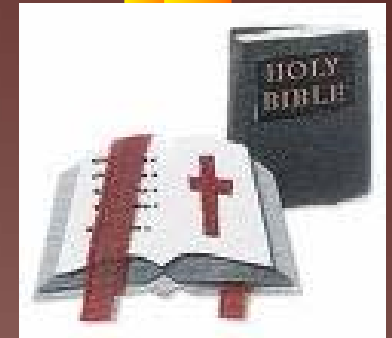
Three versions of the Rule

1209—Few Scripture Texts

1221—Scripture Texts Dominate

1223—Reduction of Scripture to 4 quotations, barring allusions

- Gradual reduction of Scriptural texts
- An increasing juridical tone
- The legalistic mentality predominated until 1965

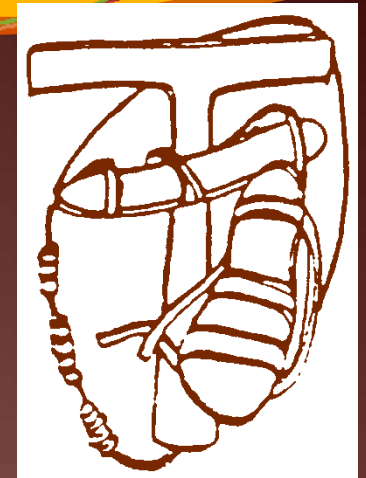




Rule of 1223

- Authentic work of Francis
- “I” texts are internal evidence
- Missionary Discourse: Mt 10
- Concrete experience of the fraternity over a 10 year span
- Not a legislative document
- Main concern—living according to the pattern of the Gospel

Esser's Commentary



- A way of life with Christ as the model
- “Lesser Brothers”—Fraternity characterized by minority
- A commitment of obedience to the Pope—loyalty to the Roman Church is personalized
- Profession—entry not into a monastery, but into a relationship of obedience

Practicing the Gospel in Daily life

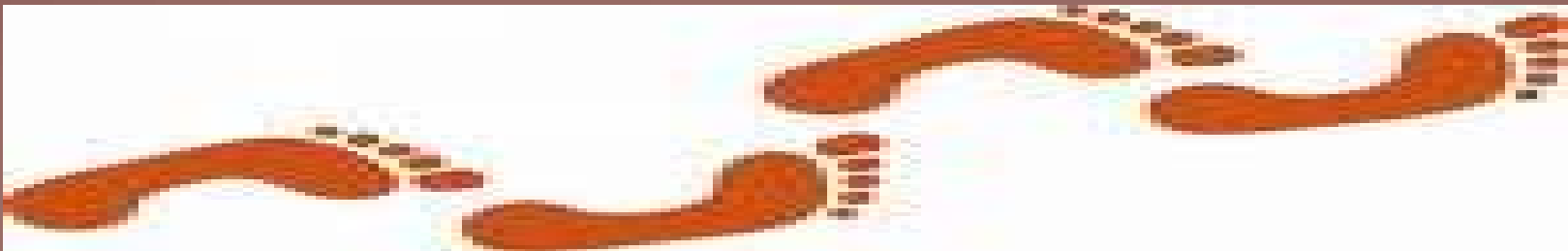
- “When they go about the world”

The decisive phrase for interpreting the Rule

- No quarreling or disputing or judging
- Being meek, peaceful, modest and humble
- Traveling not like the rich, but like people of little means



- Going among people as peacemakers
- Wages earned are for themselves & their community and should not lead to accumulation of excessive funds
- Live as pilgrims and strangers
- Treat one another as members of one family and love them with a mother's love
- Care for the sick according to the Golden Rule
- Brothers or Sisters in sin seek healing.



Four Components of Franciscan Gospel Life

- A commitment to be people of prayer
- A commitment to be lesser ones among God's people
- A commitment to create a brotherhood and sisterhood of mutual love and care among themselves
- A commitment to go about the world as heralds of the peace of God's reign (Monti, D. 2009. *Francis and His Brothers*: 152).



Francis and the Word



- Reverence for the Word as the Son of God
- Internalizing the Word—Parable of the Sower and the Seed (ER 22)
- Nourish the charism by immersion in the Word of God.



From Giacomo Bini

The spirituality fashioned by Francis and Clare is based on an attentive hearing and immediately obeying the Word of God.



The Gospel vs Worldliness

SECULARISM



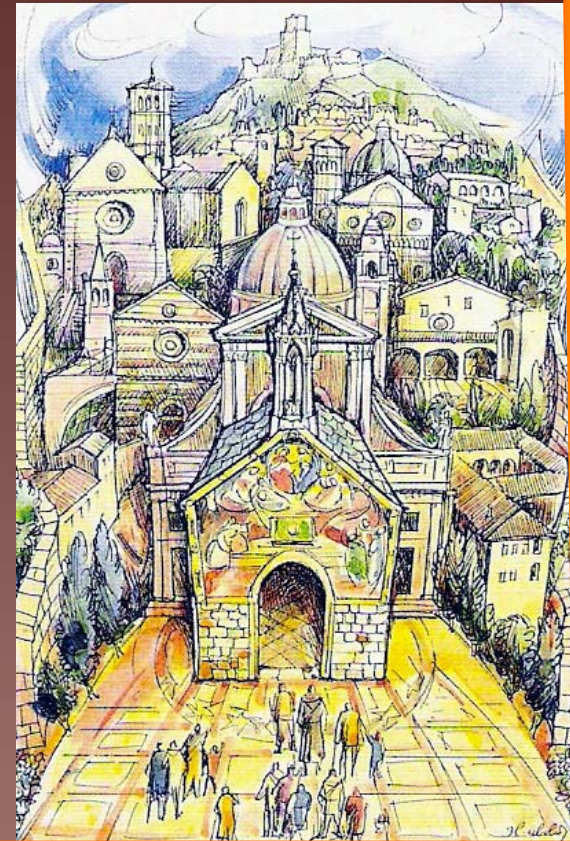
Counter-Culture

- DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD
- BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY
- RENEWING OF YOUR MINDS (Rom 12:2).



God Made Manifest

We are a community of brothers and sisters who, within the communion of the church wish simply to live a Gospel type of life. The Gospel must be manifest in life before it is verbalized into a message (Monti 2009: 152).





- Ecclesia semper reformanda—the Church must continually be reformed.
- Francis's and our mission—
"Rebuild my house."
- Give witness to the Gospel by word and example.

From the Minister General

We should place ourselves before the Gospel as children to be enlightened by it. We are called to discover the Gospel as the Book of Life. We must see it as the fundamental text in our formation.

The return to the Gospel is a return to Christ.

- ✠ Read the Word
- ✠ Listen to the Word
- ✠ Compare your life to the Word
- ✠ Obey the Word
- ✠ Proclaim the Word
- ✠ Make this the daily nourishment of your life and mission.



Echoed in the SFO Constitutions

- The Secular Franciscan, committed to following the example and the teachings of Christ, must personally and assiduously study the Gospel and Sacred Scripture. The fraternity and its leaders should foster love for the Word of the Gospel and help the brothers and sisters to know and understand it as it is proclaimed by the Church with the assistance of the Holy Spirit (SFO-GC 9:2; Rule 4:3).
- The candidates are guided to read and meditate on Sacred Scripture, to come to know the person and writing of Francis and of Franciscan spirituality and to study the Rule and Constitutions (SFO-GC 40:2).

From Francis to us:

Since I am the servant of all, I am obliged to serve all and to administer to them the fragrant words of my Lord...Therefore I have proposed to set before you...the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Word of the Father, and the words of the Holy Spirit, which are spirit and life (2LtF 2).

