

Francis of Assisi, Penitent

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SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF 13TH CENTURY BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF PENANCE

Adherence to Catholicism and Fidelity to the Church.

Eucharist, Reconciliation, and Priesthood.

Penance is not a state, but a journey to God.

The spirit of love is part of the life of penance

Virtues for the Penitent.

FRANCIS OF ASSISI, PENITENT

Before Francis was a friar, he was a penitent.

Francis' time as a penitent was one of spiritual and theological maturation.

Francis living and preaching penance complemented Innocent III's vision for renewal of the church.

Innocent III saw the value of itinerant preaching, in strictest poverty.

The people in Francis' era expected a correlation between life lived and words preached.

Francis' message of penance and conversion fell upon fertile soil ready to receive it.

Penance becomes the fundamental charism of the Third Order.

Penance is ultimately about relationship.

“Jesus ‘occupied’ Francis.” – Thaddeus Horgan, SA

Is there a way we can project the text of the Rule? (Usually I have it as a handout to read.)

THE EARLIER EXHORTATION – PROLOGUE TO OFS RULE

The Earlier Exhortation written by St. Francis and one of the earliest.

This text is seen the form of life Francis intended for lay penitents associated with the Franciscan movement.

As Prologue, the Earlier Exhortation informs the OFS Rule with the voice and mind of Francis.

It is the lens through which we view the Rule and our Way of Life as Secular Franciscans.

It has several indispensable themes:

- Trinitarian
- Christocentric
- Catholic and sacramental

It provides Secular Franciscans with our identity: We are penitents.

The Prologue contains five exhortations:

- love God totally
- love our neighbor as ourselves
- hate our sinful tendencies
- receive the body and blood of Christ in a worthy manner
- produce good fruits of penance

THOUGHTS ON PENANCE

“Jesus’ life is the way God’s love literally entered our world and touched the hearts of men and women. Such love must be responded to. *This is the uncomplicated substance of Franciscan spirituality.* This is why Francis preached penance, or conversion of heart, and directed that it was to be proclaimed by his followers.” – Thaddeus Horgan, SA

“Penance becomes a penetrating and ongoing emptying of one’s self and a subsequent replenishment with the Lord. Francis teaches us that the embrace of penance brings about a profound change in our relationships with God, a change that we can understand only in light of the revelation of Jesus.” – Regis J. Armstrong, OFM Cap.

"The term ‘penance’ in Franciscanism is equivalent to the biblical meaning of metanoia, understood as an intimate conversion of the heart to God, as a continuous state of being. It is not a question of doing penance but of being penitent." – Lino Temperini, TOR

“Penance is not a state but a journey that leads to God...It is spontaneous, the result of our response to the love of God and is enlivened by his spirit.” – Raffaele Pazzelli, TOR

Conversion is a daily experience made possible only by grace: “Francis did not merely learn how to be converted. *He converted.* This happened because he knew his need for God. This is very difficult for many to do today.” –Thaddeus Horgan, SA

“Tertiarism, as a way of living, is a part of Christianity—the cream of the Gospel translated into the terms of everyday life. Christianity lays down the *general norms* that govern our relations with God and man. [The Secular Franciscan Order], like all approved Orders of the church, is a *specific way* of living up to those laws.” – *Hidden Power, The Rule of the Third Order of St. Francis*, 1940

United by their vocation as “brothers and sisters of penance” and motivated by the dynamic power of the gospel, let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the gospel calls “conversion.” Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily.

Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, Article 7