

## **Chapter 2**

### **THE WAY OF LIFE**

This is an invitation to reflect on Chapter 2 – THE WAY OF LIFE of the Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order. This is an exercise that is divided into four parts:

Part One – Articles 4 – 7

Part Two – Articles 8-11

Part Three – Articles 12-15

Part Four – Articles 16-19

This is not a re-invention of the Rule, Chapter Two. It is a way to facilitate the study and discussion of the Rule's Way of Life as given to us by St. Francis and approved by Pope Paul VI. As Franciscans, a re-visit and re-read of the Rule can only benefit our understanding of our call and vocation as Secular Franciscans.

This can be used for ongoing formation in your local fraternities or as a home study guide. Below are some ideas to consider as you develop your own exercise to fit your individual Fraternity.

- Make a special prayer space with candles where you will have little to no distractions.
- Handouts can be made for the section/sections you will be studying. Extra, blank sheets for notes are helpful.
- Small groups can do this exercise in a circle or at a table. Larger groups can be divided into separate circles or tables.
- Center yourself and your group and invoke the Holy Spirit with a special prayer.
- Leader or volunteer should read each Article slowly and prayerfully.
- Pause for reflection.
- Emphasizing the 2022-2023 National Secular Franciscan Fraternity Theme of "Listen, Discern and Go Forth", ask members to think about listening, discerning and going forth as it relates to the Article. This is an appropriate time for discussion either in one group or smaller groups. Leader or volunteer may prompt members to write down either one word or short phrase that comes to them for each Article in the box provided or on a separate sheet of paper.
- Remember to take your time. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT: TAKE THE TIME TO PROCESS THOUGHTS AND ALLOW DETAILED DISCUSSION EVEN IF YOU ONLY COMPLETE ONE ARTICLE.** You know your Fraternity best, so tailor this exercise for the benefit of all sisters and brothers.

**4. The rule and life of the Secular Franciscans is this: to observe the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ by following the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, who made Christ the inspiration and the center of his life with God and people. Christ, the gift of the Father's love, is the way to him, the truth into which the Holy Spirit leads us, and the life which he has come to give abundantly. Secular Franciscans should devote themselves especially to careful reading of the gospel, going from gospel to life and life to the gospel.**

**5. Secular Franciscans, therefore, should seek to encounter the living and active person of Christ in their brothers and sisters, in Sacred Scripture, in the Church, and in liturgical activity. The faith of Saint Francis, who often said "I see nothing bodily of the Most High Son of God in this world except his most holy body and blood", should be the inspiration and pattern of their Eucharistic life.**

**6. They have been made living members of the Church by being buried and raised with Christ in baptism; they have been united more intimately with the Church by profession. Therefore, they should go forth as witnesses and instruments of her mission among all people, proclaiming Christ by their life and words. Called like Saint Francis to rebuild the Church and inspired by his example, let them devote themselves energetically to living in full communion with the pope, bishops, and priests, fostering an open and trusting dialogue of apostolic effectiveness and creativity.**

**7. 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 itself calls "conversion". Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion be carried out daily. On this road to renewal the sacrament of reconciliation is the privileged sign of the Father's mercy and the source of grace.**

**Listen (Hear/Read)**

**Discern (Think/Contemplate)**

**Go Forth (Act/Witness)**

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**Go Forth (Act/Witness)**

**8. As Jesus was the true worshipper of the Father, so let prayer and contemplation be the soul of all they are and do. Let them participate in the sacramental life of the Church, above all the Eucharist. Let them join in liturgical prayer in one of the forms proposed by the Church, reliving the mysteries of the life of Christ.**

**9. The Virgin Mary, humble servant of the Lord, was open to his every word and call. She was embraced by Francis with indescribable love and declared the protectress and advocate of his family. The Secular Franciscans should express their ardent love for her by imitating her complete self-giving and by praying earnestly and confidently.**

**10. Uniting themselves to the redemptive obedience of Jesus, who placed his will into the Father's hands, let them faithfully fulfil the duties proper to their various circumstances of life. Let them also follow the poor and crucified Christ, witness to him even in difficulties and persecutions.**

**11. Trusting in the Father, Christ chose for himself and his mother a poor and humble life, even though he valued created things attentively and lovingly. Let the Secular Franciscans seek a proper spirit of detachment from temporal goods by simplifying their own material needs. Let them be mindful that according to the gospel they are stewards of the goods received for the benefit of God's children. Thus, in the spirit of "the Beatitudes", and as pilgrims and strangers on their way to the home of the Father, they should strive to purify their hearts from every tendency and yearning for possession and power.**

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**Discern (Think/Contemplate)**

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**Go Forth (Act/Witness)**

**12. Witnessing to the good yet to come and obliged to acquire purity of heart because of the vocation they have embraced, they should set themselves free to love God and their brothers and sisters.**

**13. As the Father sees in every person the features of his Son, the firstborn of many brothers and sisters, so the Secular Franciscans with a gentle and courteous spirit 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.**

**14. 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. Mindful that anyone “who follows Christ, the perfect man, becomes more of a man himself”, let them exercise their responsibilities competently in Christian spirit of service.**

**15. Let them individually and collectively be in the forefront in promoting justice by the testimony of their human lives and their courageous initiatives. Especially in the field of public life, they should make definite choices in harmony with their faith.**

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**Discern (Think/Contemplate)**

**Go Forth (Act/Witness)**

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**Go Forth (Act/Witness)**

**16. Let them esteem work both as a gift and as a sharing in the creation, redemption, and service of the human community.**

**17. In their family they should cultivate the Franciscan spirit of peace, fidelity, and respect for life, striving to make of it a sign of a world already renewed in Christ. By living the grace of matrimony, husbands and wives in particular should bear witness in the world to the love of Christ for his Church. They should joyfully accompany their children on their human and spiritual journey by providing a simple and open Christian education and being attentive to the vocation of each child.**

**18. Moreover they should respect all creatures, animate and inanimate, which “bear the imprint of the Most High”, and they should strive to move from the temptation of exploiting creation to the Franciscan concept of universal kinship.**

**19. 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. Messengers of perfect joy in every circumstance, they should strive to bring joy and hope to others. Since they are immersed in the resurrection of Christ, which gives true meaning to Sister Death, let them serenely tend toward the ultimate encounter with the Father.**

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