

Rule – Activity 1: Bringing to light how each of us is understanding and living the Rule today, and why.

We have each come to the Secular Franciscan Order by a different path. Our reasons for being here affect how we understand and live the Rule. To understand how we may grow in living the Rule in the future, we need to understand where we are now.

If you are using this in a group setting, we suggest pairing up for sharing about each question. This allows fuller individual sharing/relationship building.

This series of reflection questions is loosely structured on events in the life of St. Francis.

- 1) Francis had a significant conversion experience. Whether you are a convert, a revert, or a cradle Catholic who never left, what experience led you to start the search that ultimately brought you to the Secular Franciscan Order?
- 2) After a short time, Francis started attracting followers.
 - a. What were you looking for when you started investigating the Secular Franciscan Order?
 - b. Once you “came and saw”, what impressed you and made you want to stay?
 - c. What does fraternity mean to you?
- 3) Within different branches of the Franciscan family, different aspects of the Franciscan charism are emphasized (and have been from the beginning). For the First Order, minority came “first”; for the Second Order, it was poverty, and for the Third Order, it was penance. All of these elements and more are in our Rule, and while we all profess one Rule, the emphasis will be different for different people and at different times. What aspect of the Rule means the most to you right now, and why? (It will probably be the phrase you can say without looking at the Rule.)
- 4) Francis focused on living a Gospel life, and that is reflected in the Rules of all three Orders today. What does it mean to you to go “from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel”?
- 5) Francis relied on his companions and Clare and her sisters, especially when he was ill. How have you experienced the support of your fraternity in a difficult time?
- 6) How is your life different today because you are a Secular Franciscan?
- 7) How would you summarize the Secular Franciscan way of life?

In closing, this is the blessing of St. Francis that is included at the end of our Rule.

“And whoever observes these things let him be blessed in Heaven with the blessing of the Most High Father, and on earth with the blessing of His Beloved Son with the Most Holy Spirit the Paraclete” (Blessing of St Francis found in The Testament of Francis)

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