

Rule – Activity 2: Let us begin again!

To better appreciate our way of life, we should go from Rule to life and from life to the Rule.

The Rule can be viewed as being about our relationships.

- Chapter 1 – relationship to the rest of the Franciscan Family
- Chapter 2, articles 4-9 – relationship to God and Church
- Chapter 2, articles 10-19 – relationship to other people and the rest of creation
- Chapter 3 – relationship in fraternity, at various levels

There is a new translation of the Rule that came out in 2020. See the National Fraternity website (secularfranciscansusa.org) to access a copy.

Use the Constitutions (especially an electronic copy with links) to get a better understanding of how to apply the Rule. The Constitutions also have an updated translation on the National Fraternity website. To get an idea of the importance of Constitutions, remember that many religious orders follow the Rule of St. Benedict, but implement it differently via their constitutions. In fact, St. Francis was directed to use an existing Rule for his friars, but followed his understanding that the Lord gave him and his brothers a new way to be in the world.

Some ideas for living the Rule more deeply follow. In addition to providing ideas for personal growth, discuss with your fraternity to see where you may grow TOGETHER.

- Regular prayer (Liturgy of the Hours, Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise, St. Francis' Office of the Passion, etc.). The regular use of these scripture-oriented prayers also helps more of Scripture sink into your heart. That's where Francis could call it forth.
- Regular Scripture – reading the daily Mass readings is a good practice. The publication *Word Among Us* and Bishop Robert Barron's reflections on the day's Gospel are good additions to the daily readings, to name just two. We need to practice going from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel daily!
- Ongoing formation, with fraternity and on your own. Some read a biography of Francis every year (there are plenty of them). Make use of the writings of and about Francis from the early sources. There are a lot of excellent formation materials at our National Fraternity website.
- Show up! Be present at fraternity gatherings as much as possible. (Part of living in the world is that we can't do everything all the time.) You never know when your presence there will make the difference for someone else.
- SERVE. Where you can – fraternity, family, church, workplace, all of the above. You learn to live the Rule by living!

A few more specific ideas:

- Spiritual direction – if you don't have a director, look into it. Some have Zoom-based sessions post-pandemic, no travel required.
- The Rosary as a means to go from Gospel to life and from life to the Gospel. This made a serious difference in my life during the pandemic, and I keep getting new "aha" moments as I think about the mysteries and what intention to pray for.
- Lectio divina applied to the Rule. The Rule is so short that we can skim through it quickly. Taking a single article, or even a single sentence, and reading it slowly and meditatively can really help understand it better and apply it in our lives. This can be a good fraternity activity, as well as a personal one. Try it now with a one-sentence article, article 12.

"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."

Reading 1 – just listen closely

Reading 2 – what phrase strikes you?

Reading 3 – Talk to God about how this might look in your life

- Try to listen to those around you as if God is speaking to you through them. Sometimes He will be! And sometimes God will use you too. Notice and be thankful.

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)

Vickie Klick, OFS – Mother Cabrini Regional Fraternity