

News & Views

CNSA



TAV USA - Fall - 2017 - Lester Bach OFM Cap - CNSA Emeritus

WHAT NOW?

Psst: Read the cartoon first.

What does this say about Franciscans? Are we some kind of fanatics? Does our desire to live the gospel, as guided by the OFS Rule, make us look like extremists? Do we feel like outsiders in homes, farms, churches and offices of the world?

If you're a bit like me, I certainly can learn better ways to dialogue with others; better ways to forgive angry words; better ways to achieve unity with people; better ways to deal with emotions, and to persist in caring for others.

We share gospel ways without being arbitrary. We find ways to work with conservatives, moderates and extremists. I kid you not!

Each of us can think we are always right. We cling to our ideas and opinions. We may not be open to the possibility that we could be wrong. Thus we may not even have an



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understanding of "another's" point of view. Dialogue with male or female, young or old, friend or enemy, calls for *attentive listening*. At least we actually hear and understand the ideas even if we disagree. We cannot afford to deal arrogantly with people who disagree with us. It is possible we may not always be totally correct! It takes patience to listen and understand another's point of view and maintain a relationship even when we disagree. Many parents learn this wisdom in their family arguments. Arrogance seldom give others a reason to listen to us. If they do listen (including children, relatives and friends), they may act otherwise when they are not in our presence.

Political and social situations test gospel values and religious perceptions. They challenge our ability to follow the entire OFS Rule. The Rule is sensible, offering a dedicated way to live. Our attempt to *live it* in daily life can be difficult. That's what *profession* is about - *faithfulness!* Intellectual acceptance without consequent action, is a partial approach to faithfulness to the OFS Rule. Our vocation calls us to practice the entire OFS Rule and influence society both within and outside of fraternal life. We are ordinary

people who **profess** to follow the OFS Rule. St. Francis and St. Clare teach us through their lives and words as we attempt to design a more peaceful and friendly world.

The concern for non-violence, sustainable development, justice and peace, and care for our environment are of vital importance for our humanity. They cannot, however, be understood apart from a profound reflection upon the innate dignity of every human life from conception to natural death, a dignity conferred by God Himself and thus inviolable.

Pope Benedict XVI - July 17, 2008

Perhaps we find it difficult to embrace such ideals. But we must do more than read the words. We implement ideas, practicing them in daily life. To show dignity to violent men or women isn't the same as approval of their actions nor a way to support their lifestyle. It does mean being **faithful** to our profession.

The Franciscan spirit looks for ways to help people realize their dignity, given by the Trinity. It may take a long time or even a lifetime before they accept respect and concern and learn new ways. Our task is to be **faithful** to our profession as Franciscans. That includes choosing to share appropriate daily experiences at fraternity gatherings.

... I implore you by God's mercy to offer your very selves to Him: a living sacrifice, dedicated and fit for His acceptance, the worship offered by mind and heart. Conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds. Then you will be able to discern the will of God, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect.

By authority of the grace God has given me I say to everyone among you: do not think too highly of yourself, but form a sober estimate based on the measure of faith that God has dealt to each of you. ...

... Let us use the different gifts allotted to us by God's grace; the gift of inspired utterance, for example, let us use in proportion to our faith; the gift of administration to administer; the gift of teaching to teach, the gift of counseling to counsel. If you give to charity, give without grudging; if you are a leader, lead with enthusiasm; if you help others in distress, do it cheerfully.

Love in all sincerity, loathing evil and holding fast to the good. Let love of the Christian

community show itself in mutual affection. Esteem others more highly than yourself.

Romans 12: 1-3 / 6-10 (REB)



Many things are learned between:

Grandparents and grandchildren:

between parents, children and spouses;

between friends and relatives.

between enemies and strangers

We may not be 100% successful in the desire to develop relationships and live "gospelly." But we persist and learn fresh ways from one another. We live in a way that people can understand the gospel when they observe us! We discover people with a vocation to the OFS. The more fully the OFS Rule shows in our lives, the better our attraction to others. Pious words are not enough. Daily life needs to offer a clear example of gospel living.

A Church which 'goes forth' is a Church whose doors are open. Going out to others in order to reach the fringes of humanity does not mean rushing out aimlessly into the world. Often it is better simply to slow down, to put aside our eagerness in order to see and listen to others, to stop rushing from one thing to another and to remain with someone who has faltered along the way. At times we have to be like the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.

Evangelii Gaudium - The joy of the gospel - Pope Francis - #46

I recently attended a retreat/workshop given by Robert J. Wicks. He tells this story in his book, Night Call - Embracing compassion and hope in a troubled world.

Now, when I teach, supervise, or mentor professional helpers and healers, I remember this (Previous story) about myself and surprise them with the comment: "Don't be sensitive to others who are different than you are." After I give the time for this to set in and see their surprised, sometimes shocked reactions, I finally go on. "No, don't merely be sensitive to those you seek to help to heal, because 'sensitivity' is frequently a code word for "I'll learn their language so I can teach them my truths." Sensitivity is not enough. We must go beyond and be willing to learn from everyone around us" (Even those who seem not to have the time to acknowledge us during our daily walks).

Night Call - Robert J. Wicks - Pages 16-17
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Make me an instrument of your peace. - Please!