

PATRIMONY OF THE OFS

Introduction to the Financial Aspects of the OFS

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The teaching of the Second Vatican Council, in particular the conciliar Constitution, *Gaudium et spes*, says, “the Church herself makes use of temporal things insofar as her own mission requires it.(1)” The church community lives, not only as a spiritual reality, but in the dynamics of human existence, including its material condition. This particular identity and condition are manifested in a style and form that consistently translate its human-divine nature and its salvific ministry. Therefore, the management of temporal goods must express and serve that community consisting of the one People of God.

The goods in the Church, therefore, are clearly destined for use by the community, because the members of the people of God are called to share the goods(2). Sharing is, in fact, the way of life of the Christian community. It is a visible manifestation of that deep unity of spirit that is gained through faith and charity. “This is the ‘our’ bread, ‘one’ for ‘many’.” The poverty of the Beatitudes is the virtue of sharing: it calls us to pool and to share both material and spiritual goods, not because it is required, but out of love, because the abundance of some may remedy the needs of others”(3).

This is a concept that can be found clearly expressed in Article 15.3 OFS GC: “Secular Franciscans should pledge themselves to reduce their own personal needs so as to be better able to share spiritual and material goods with their brothers and sisters, especially those most in need. They should give thanks to God for the goods they have received, using them as good stewards and not as owners.”

All of article 15 of the GC OFS refers, moreover, to article 11 of the OFS Rule, which affirms: “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.”

The consistency of the OFS teaching and the documents of the Church faithfully reflect moreover, the concept of Franciscan “pauperism” founded on the Gospel way of using the “world,” which condemns any unproductive “hoarding” while enhancing the bonds of reciprocity and solidarity (4). Thus, according to Franciscan economic thought, it is not a sin in itself to own property as long as what you have will be shared with those most in need: the purpose of using what is possessed (including money) is the community, the building of fraternal relations for the common good.

These are goals we also find in the early Christian communities, as evidenced by some passages of the *Acts of Apostles*(5), by which the primitive Franciscan fraternities (like the ones today) were inspired. St. Francis, attentive to the substance of the Gospel message, understands and lives this community aspect of goods, wanting to break away completely from them in order to better embrace God and Brothers, as a way of following the “poor” Christ.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:



This does not make practical sense, if one is not invited to live the charism proper to the OFS. We cannot hoard goods, we must share them. We cannot speculate, we must be generous. We cannot acquire without worrying about the

way in which we acquire. We must be responsible in the use, disposal and acquisition of goods in accordance with the desire of the donors. Reflect on these matters when making contributions to the common fund (OFS Rule, article 25).

1 *Gaudium et spes* n. 76

2 *Lumen Gentium* n. 13th

3 Catechism of the Catholic Church n. 2,833

4 See “De usu paupere”, Peter John Olivi (1248-1298)

5 See Acts 2, 44-47, 4, 32-35