



FORMATION COMMISSION

A REFLECTION ON OUR FRANCISCAN SENSES

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When we were very young, we learned that we have five basic senses that help us collect information and process the world around us. We see, we hear, we smell, we touch, and we taste. Our senses give us an awareness of the world around us.

As Franciscans, we strive daily to live a Gospel life and follow Jesus in the footsteps of our Seraphic Father Francis. We have the opportunity and responsibility to preach the Gospel with every encounter and interaction we have. Daily conversion calls us to do just that. We are called by our profession to let the Gospel values guide the way we perceive, interpret, and interact with the world around us. With our basic senses in mind, let us ask ourselves these questions and reflect on our answers.

Do I see others with Franciscan eyes? Do I use a Franciscan lens as I take in the world and see the imprint of the Most High? Especially when I meet others who are different and hold different beliefs, do I see and accept them “as a gift of the Lord and an image of Christ?” (OFS Rule: Art.5) What do people see when they see me? Are my actions an observable example of Christ? What does God see as he looks into my heart?

Do I hear with Franciscan ears of love? Do I hear and answer the call of the Spirit? Do I hear the cry of the poor? Let us hear “The option for those who are least, those whom society discards” (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 195). What do people hear when I speak? Are my words of love and a proclamation of Christ? What does God hear when he listens to my prayers?

Do I smell with a Franciscan nose? Do I recognize the fragrant beauty of creation? In 2 Corinthians 2:14-15, the apostle Paul tells us “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ and manifests through us the odor of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are the aroma of Christ for God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.” Do I smell of the fragrance of Christ’s love?

Do I touch with Franciscan compassion? Do I reach out and relate to others with love? Am I willing to open my heart to love others with the same acceptance St. Francis gave as he embraced the leper? Do I keep in touch with my Franciscan brothers and sisters and participate in fraternity life?

Do I taste with a Franciscan tongue? Do my thoughts and ideals have the flavor of the Franciscan? Consider my Franciscan palate. Do I savor the Gospel? Do I pray for vocations and ask others to taste and see? We are reminded and reassured in Psalm 34:9 to “Taste and see that the LORD is good.” Do I trust in the Lord? Has what seemed bitter “changed... into sweetness of body and soul?” (Testament of St. Francis) Do I taste the sweetness of body and soul?

Sisters and Brothers, we are called to be messengers of perfect joy as Secular Franciscans, members of an evangelical order. We must ask ourselves, do our words, thoughts and actions exude Franciscan love and mercy so others experience Christ’s love? Are you using your Franciscan senses?

