

CNSA

# NEWS & VIEWS

TAU-USA - Lester Bach OFM Cap - CNSA Emeritus

IF YOU WANT  
PEACE  
WORK  
FOR  
JUSTICE

-Paul VI

## Our Times

At the present time we face many social and religious issues that are difficult to deal with. We take time for personal and community reflection about information from media or personal experiences. Franciscans are faithful to the OFS Rule and Constitutions. We contribute to peace and love within our fraternities, homes, countries, the world and the Church.

The issue of sexual abuse or mismanagement among many people saddens us. Human failure has to be dealt with. Following the Gospel in these issues is no easy task. But for us it is vitally important.

Some people label migrants and refugees as a danger to our country. People who look different or speak a different language are treated as threats rather than as neighbors. We call some people lazy or foolish or violent. It is easy to label people.

Our Franciscan vocation calls us to be faithful to the Gospel. The following words reflect some elements we embrace at **profession**.

*Rule 13 They should deepen the true foundations of universal kinship and create a spirit of welcome and an atmosphere of fraternity everywhere. They should firmly commit themselves to oppose every form of exploitation, discrimination, and exclusion and against every attitude of indifference in relation to others.*

Article 18.2 (OFS Constitutions)

*Do we?*

## So what is expected of Franciscans?

Dialogue, for example, invites us to be *attentive listeners*, to understand one another and the issues that surround us. In the past we may have learned ideas or opinions that are no longer credible. We do not blame others who shared what they believed. At times we cling to "our way" of understanding the faith or social insights. Whether it is still totally accurate or not is another question to consider.

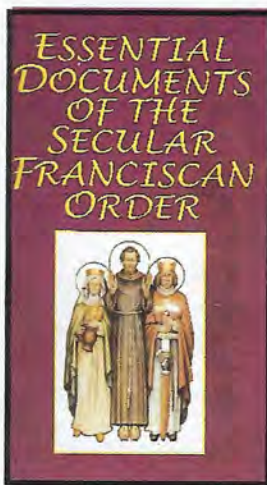
Franciscans are called to live in a way where change ("*conversion!*") is a clear option! For some people Vatican-II is not a favorite nor is Pope Francis! But they both invite a fresh look at our faith with texts that are part of the teaching Church. Their words may offer us more than we want to accept since we already "know" our faith. Perhaps the problem is at least partially in us. We realize that personal *conversion* may be needed.

How do Franciscans deal with actions of *exploitation?* or *discrimination?* or *exclusion?* or *indifference?* OR: What practical steps do we take "*to create a spirit of welcome?*" or an "*atmosphere of fraternity everywhere?*" The call for such actions can stimulate feelings of anger, resentment or frustration, both in us or in others!

Sometimes *personal conversion* may not seem reasonable. It could mean that our **Profession** as Franciscans loses some of its' meaning. The **OFS Rule (#7)** expects *conversion* to happen daily! ... *let them conform their thoughts and deeds to those of Christ by means of that radical interior change which the Gospel itself calls "conversion."* Human frailty makes it necessary that this conversion **be carried out daily.** Really?

It may be difficult to deal with people who are always 'right,' who 'know it all!' OR, who resist change when the need for change is obvious! It takes honest, open-minded and prayerful people to be faithful to *personal conversion*. On some issues we may be blind without knowing it! Fraternity dialogue can help us discover fresh ways to understand the implications of the Gospel and the OFS Rule and Constitutions. We are called to offer examples of peace, seeking ways of unity and love to our friends, neighbors and enemies who may enter our lives at work, in church, in our neighborhood or even at home..





**Rule 19** *Peace is the work of justice and the fruit of reconciliation and of fraternal love. Secular Franciscans are called to be bearers of peace in their families and in society:*

- + they should see to the proposal and spreading of peaceful ideas and attitudes;
- + they should develop their own initiatives and should collaborate individually and as a fraternity with initiatives of the Pope, the local churches, and the Franciscan Family;
- + they should collaborate with those movements & its institutions which promote peace while respecting its

Article 23.1 (OFS Constitutions)

authentic foundations.

+

They seek to deepen, in the light of faith, the values and choices of the evangelical life according to the Rule of the OFS:

- + Rule 7 in a continually renewed journey of conversion and of formation.
- + Rule 4 open to the challenges that come from society and from the Church's life situation, "... going from Gospel to life and from life to Gospel."
- + in the personal and communal dimensions of this journey.

Article 8.2 (OFS Constitutions)

+

Mindful that the Holy Spirit is the source of their vocation and the animator of fraternal life and mission, Secular Franciscans should seek to imitate the faithfulness of Francis to his inspiration. They should listen to the exhortation of the Saint to desire above all things "the Spirit of God at work within them."

Article 11 (OFS Constitutions)

+

**We are Gospel people.** We are faithful in following the OFS Rule and Constitutions. We recognize a need for conversion to develop in our Franciscan lives. Ignorance of this need is no excuse! We face many challenges every day. The guidance of the Gospel and the Rule and Constitutions, moves our inner spirit and shows itself in our external example. It is our way to contribute to a peaceful and unified world. St. Paul's words encourage us to give witness to St. Francis' way of living.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if one has a grievance against another; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also do. And over all these put on love, that is, the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Christ control your hearts, the peace to which you were also called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3: 12-17

Scripture and the OFS Rule and Constitutions are clear in their call!:

... In these fraternities the brothers and sisters, led by the Spirit, strive for perfect charity in their own secular state. By their profession they pledge themselves to live the Gospel in the manner of St. Francis by means of this Rule approved by the Church.

OFS Rule - #2

+++

Pope John XXIII, a member of the OFS, wrote these words to help us persist in a loving approach to life and ministry.

Consult not your fears,  
but your hopes  
and your dreams.

Think not about your frustrations,  
but about  
your unfulfilled potential.

Concern yourself not  
with what you tried  
and failed in,  
but what it is  
still possible to do!

Pope John XXIII

+++

Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action. And by this we will know that we are from the truth and will reassure our hearts before him. ...

And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who obey his commandments abide in him, and he abides in them! By this we know that he abides in us by the Spirit he has given us.

1 John 3:18-19 / 23-24

+++

Rule 14 Secular Franciscans should always act as a leaven in the environment in which they live through the witness of their fraternal love and clear Christian motivations.

Article 19.1 (OFS Constitutions)

**SHALOM**