

A VISION FOR FRANCISCAN LIFE -  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE THIRD ORDER RULE

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF THEOLOGY

in the subject

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

at the

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

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JUNE 2013

## **Summary**

The dissertation is a critical reflection on the relevance of Franciscan spirituality over eight centuries with special focus on the Third Order Regular. This spirituality is rooted in the life and writings of St Francis and St Clare of Assisi and their experience of the *kenotic* Christ. The Franciscan charism prevails in the world today as a living response to God's transforming love which is expressed in a ministry of loving service and solidarity with the poor and marginalised – re-enacting Francis' radical conversion when he embraced the leper. The Third Order Regular, inspired by Vatican II which called for a return to the charism of religious founders, returned to its roots with the revised Rule of 1982 based on the writings of Francis and Clare and grounded in Sacred Scripture. The Rule's vision corresponds with the 1996 document *Vita Consecrata* on consecrated life and its mission to be prophetic witnesses to Christ today.

## **Key terms**

Francis and Clare of Assisi

Friars Minor

Poor Clares

Third Order Regular of St Francis

*Kenotic* Christ

*Metanoia*

Penance

Gospel life

Christo-centrism

Consecrated life

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## **Acknowledgements**

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Dr Judith Coyle, of St Augustine's College of South Africa, for guiding and encouraging me through this dissertation with her expertise and insights which she shared with me in so many critical ways and in such a generous spirit.

My thanks to her are profound.

I thank my community of Franciscan Nardini Sisters of the Holy Family at Nkandla for their support in making it possible for me to complete this dissertation, especially my superior, Sr Dr Ellen Lindner, for her sensitive understanding.

My thanks also go to my editor, Sydney Duval, for his significant help with language and for urging me to persevere. When I showed signs of running out of steam he used wit and humour to keep me going.

## Declaration

I declare that “*A vision for Franciscan life – An examination of the Third Order Rule*” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references,

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Martina Gertrud Anneliese Seiler

## Abbreviations

### Sacred Scripture:

Gen (Gn)	Genesis
Tb	Tobit
Ps	Psalms
Wis (Ws)	Wisdom
Mt	The Gospel according to Matthew
Mk	The Gospel according to Mark
Lk	The Gospel according to Luke
Jn	The Gospel according to John
Acts (Ac)	The Acts of the Apostles
Rm	Romans
2 Cor (Co)	2 Corinthians
Gal (Ga)	Galatians
Eph (Ep)	Ephesians
Phil (Ph)	Philippians
Col	Colossians
1 Tim (1 Tm)	1 Timothy
Jas (Jm)	James
1 Pt (1 P)	1 Peter
1 Jn	1 John

All biblical quotations and references have been taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*.

### Writings of St Francis of Assisi:

Adm	The Admonitions (undated writings)
CtC	The Canticle of the Creatures (1225)
ER	The Earlier Rule ( <i>Regula non bullata</i> ) (1209/10-1221)
LR	The Later Rule ( <i>Regula bullata</i> ) (1223)
1LtCl	The First Letter to the Clergy = Exhortations to the Clergy (Earlier Edition) (before 1219)
2LtCl	The Second Letter to the Clergy = Exhortations to the Clergy (Later Edition) (1220)
1LtCus	The First Letter to the Custodians (1220)
2LtCus	The Second Letter to the Custodians (1220)
1LtF	The First Letter to the Faithful = Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (1209-1215)
2LtF	The Second Letter to the Faithful = Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance (1220?)
LtMin	A Letter to a Minister (1221-1223)
LtOrd	Letter to the Entire Order (1225-1226)
LtR	A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples (1220)
OfP	The Office of the Passion (undated writings)
PrOF	A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father ( <i>Expositio in Pater Noster</i> ) (undated writings)
RH	A Rule for Hermitages (1217-1221)
SalBVM	A Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (undated writings)
SalV	A Salutation of the Virtues (undated writings)
Test	The Testament of St Francis (1226)

### Writings of St Clare of Assisi:

BICl	The Blessing of St Clare (1253)
FLCl	The Form of Life of St Clare (1253)
1LAg	The First Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague (1234)
2LAg	The Second Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague (1235)
3LAg	The Third Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague (1238)



4LAg	The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague (1253)
LEr	The Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges (undated writings)
TestCl	The Testament of St Clare (1247-1253)

## Franciscan Sources:

### Francis of Assisi:

AC	The Assisi Compilation (1244-1260)
AP	The Anonymous of Perugia (1240-1241)
1C	The Life of St Francis by Thomas of Celano (1228-1229)
2C	The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul by Thomas of Celano (1245-1247)
3C	The Treatise on the Miracles by Thomas of Celano (1250-1252)
L3C	The Legend of the Three Companions (1241-1247)
LMj	The Major Legend of St Francis by Bonaventure (1260-1263)
ScEx	The Sacred Exchange between St Francis and Lady Poverty (1237-1239)

### Clare of Assisi:

BC	The Bull of Canonization = The Papal Decree of Canonization (1254)
FLHug	The Form and Manner of Life of Cardinal Hugolino (1219)
FLInn	Form of Life of Pope Innocent IV (1247)
LCl	The Legend of St Clare (1255)
PC <sup>2</sup>	The Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi (1253)
PrPov	The Privilege of Poverty of Pope Gregory IX (1228)

## The Three Orders of St Francis:

### The First Order:

OFM	<i>Ordo Fratrum Minorum</i> : The Order of Friars Minor
OFMCap	<i>Ordo Fratrum Minorum Capuccinorum</i> : The Order of Friars Minor Capuchins
OFMConv	<i>Ordo Fratrum Minorum Conventualium</i> : The Order of Friars Minor Conventuals

### The Second Order:

OSC	<i>Ordo Sanctae Clarae</i> : Order of St Clare
OSCUrb	Order of St Clare – Urbanist Clarisses
OSCCol	Order of St Clare – Colettines
OSCCap	<i>Ordo Sanctae Clarae Capuccinorum</i> : Order of St Clare Capuchinesses

### The Third Order:

OFS	<i>Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis</i> : Secular Franciscan Order (lay Order)
TOR	<i>Tertius Ordo Regularis</i> : Third Order Regular of St Francis (vowed Order)

## Church documents:

### Vatican II documents:

AG	<i>Ad Gentes</i> : The Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (1965)
LG	<i>Lumen Gentium</i> : The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (1964)
PC <sup>1</sup>	<i>Perfectae Caritatis</i> : Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (1965)

**Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortations:**

AM	<i>Africae Munus:</i>	Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace (2011)
VC	<i>Vita Consecrata:</i>	Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World (1996)

**Code of Canon Law:**

CIC	<i>Codex Iuris Canonici:</i>	Code of Canon Law (1983)
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## **A vision for Franciscan life - An examination of the Third Order Rule**

### **1. Introduction**

#### **1.1 The research question (motivation for study)**

The Franciscan Order, also known as the Franciscan Family, was founded in 1209 as a new religious movement within the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>1</sup> At that time, Francis of Assisi, who was born Giovanni Francesco di Bernardone (1181/1182-1226), and his companions visited Pope Innocent III for a meeting that was to have profound consequences for religious life until this day.

The Pope gave Francis and his followers his verbal approval to their request to live according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Test=The Testament of St Francis 14-15). Led by the Lord (Test 14) and with this papal approval, Francis and his followers embraced a life deeply and radically centred on Christ and the Gospel, a life of poverty, compassion and ministry to the lepers, the broken and distressed outcasts of society.

Inspired and infused, especially by the humanity of Christ, they in turn inspired others to follow in His footsteps and live the Gospel by loving God and neighbour, which is at the heart of Christian life. This love of neighbour included, as it still does today, the poor and the rich, sinners, believers and unbelievers, as well as the whole of creation.

Those formative events of 1209 were the beginning of the Franciscan Order founded by Francis of Assisi, who relinquished a life of prosperity and privilege to opt for a life of spiritual and material poverty, expecting everything from the triune God. The Franciscans soon developed into three main branches, which are also called Orders. The First Order of St Francis is the Order of Friars Minor (Lesser Brothers).<sup>2</sup> The Second Order is the Order of St Clare (OSC), an Order of contemplative nuns, founded in 1212 by Clare of Assisi (1194-1253), who was herself inspired by the Gospel way of life chosen by Francis of Assisi.<sup>3</sup> My research will focus on the Third Order of St Francis, more precisely on the Third Order Regular (TOR), of which I myself am a member. The TOR is an Order of religious sisters and/or brothers who profess the vows of obedience, poverty and chastity and are mostly

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<sup>1</sup> There are also members of other churches today (e. g. the Anglican Church) whose life is inspired by the Franciscan way of living. However, they are not part of my research.

<sup>2</sup> The First Order of St Francis, the Order of Friars Minor, again comprises three branches today, the Franciscans (OFM=Ordo Fratrum Minorum), the Conventuals (OFMConv) and the Capuchins (OFMCap).

<sup>3</sup> The Order of St Clare (OSC=Ordo Sanctae Clarae) celebrated the 8<sup>th</sup> centenary of its foundation in 2012. The Second Order also includes the Order of St Clare Capuchinesses (OSCCap).

dedicated to works of charity.<sup>4</sup> The TOR is not to be confused with the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) – an Order of lay people – from which the TOR evolved. Both branches together, the TOR and the SFO, share a common heritage and together form the Third Order of St Francis. My focus will be on the vowed Order and not the secular Order.

The Third Order Regular is the largest religious Order in the Roman Catholic Church according to the statistics of 1997 when worldwide it had “more than 116.000 members in more than four hundred congregations and institutes” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:31). Hardick (1913-1999), an eminent German Franciscan scholar, stated in 1987 that 387 of those congregations and institutes were communities of sisters and 28 of them were communities of brothers (1987:45). The Third Order Regular in South Africa presently includes sixteen congregations of sisters and one community of brothers. Today all those communities live according to the newly revised Rule of the Third Order Regular which was achieved by the combined effort of those more than four hundred different communities and approved by Pope John Paul II on 8 December 1982.<sup>5</sup>

The name of the TOR-Rule is: *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis* (cf. Appendix 1; also in Carney, Godet-Calogeras & Kush 2008:308-335).<sup>6</sup>

Today it might be asked how an order, founded in medieval times, can still attract members? What dynamics must have endured through eight centuries to support so large a number of independent congregations and institutes in revising their common Rule together? What is their vision?

It needs to be understood that the newly revised Rule is not about rules and regulations as such but is a “spiritual document” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:36) about a way of life as its title already indicates. After rediscovering the importance of the writings of Francis of Assisi in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this TOR Rule of 1982, in contrast to former TOR Rules, was able to be completely based on those writings which contain many citations and references from the Gospel and from Sacred Scripture as a whole.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> These are the Church’s canonical vows (CIC=*Codex Iuris Canonici*–The Code of Canon Law; 1983:can. 654).

<sup>5</sup> Religious congregations in the Catholic Church live according to a certain Rule and Constitutions, however those congregations not affiliated to Orders have only Constitutions. The Rule sets out their life in regard to the religious vows; celibate chastity, poverty and obedience. It includes regulations concerning their communal life.

<sup>6</sup> In this paper I will use the new English translation of the TOR Rule to be found alongside the original Latin text – *Regula et Vita Fratrum et Sororum Tertii Ordinis Regularis Sancti Francisci* – in Carney, Godet-Calogeras & Kush (2008:308-335). There are two previous English translations of this Rule (in Carney & Horgan 1982:6-55 and in Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:13-29). The original Latin text is also to be found in Carney & Horgan (1982:85-97) and in Hardick (1987:9-23).

<sup>7</sup> This includes complementary passages of the writings of Clare of Assisi.

The Rule states right in the beginning that the way of life of the TOR members is centred in “[observing] the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (TOR Rule 1.1) by living the religious vows and “[f]ollowing Jesus Christ [after] the example of St Francis” (TOR Rule 1.1). What does it mean to follow Jesus Christ as Francis did? Both Francis and Clare experienced God as the supreme goodness and love, especially in the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. Francis and Clare were deeply touched by the humility of Christ’s Incarnation and by the charity of his Passion. Consequently they emphasised the *kenotic*<sup>8</sup> Christ, the poor, humble and suffering Christ who emptied himself in his Incarnation and Passion. They also admired the continuation of the *kenotic* love of Christ in the Eucharist. The Eucharist “re-enacts the self-renunciation of the cross” (Micó 1997b:274) and in his writings Francis also described the Eucharist as a continuation of the Incarnation (:274). Francis was so taken by the humility of God in continuing to come down to us in the form of simple bread that he felt compelled to follow Christ in poverty and total surrender (LtOrd=Letter to the Entire Order 26-29). Led by the Holy Spirit Francis and Clare sought to follow the *kenotic* Christ with a life of total surrender in penance, prayer, poverty, humility and minority, at the same time loving and praising God the Father within the community of the Church. Theirs was a deeply Christian and Trinitarian spirituality. A life of total surrender helped them to fully trust in God and his providence - filling them with inner joy and peace.

This was the joyful Gospel life of Francis and Clare and their companions in the Middle Ages and of their companions throughout the following centuries. The TOR members of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as well as all the other members of the Franciscan Order who share the charism<sup>9</sup> of Francis and Clare, are called and challenged to do the same. However, for many contemporaries today, even within the Church, terms like penance, poverty, humility and minority might not be understood in the same creative way. For some it could possibly have a bitter taste.

For now I would like to attend to the term of penance and its association with Franciscan spirituality because in Francis’ lifetime the Third Order was known as the “Order of Penitents”, to become known as the Third Order of St Francis only towards the end of the thirteenth century (Pazzelli 1993:1). According to tradition Francis himself had founded this order in 1221 as the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, originally for those who wanted to follow his inspiration and live the Gospel life in his spirit, but were not able to enter religious

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<sup>8</sup> *Kenotic* is a Greek expression for self-emptying. (*Kenosis* is the Greek word for emptiness).

<sup>9</sup> Charism, coming from the Greek word *kair’iz-ulm*, which means “gift”, is described as a “divine spiritual gift to individuals or groups for the good of the community” (McBrien 1995:299).

life in the First or Second Order because of marriage or for other reasons. Also the Friars Minor of the earlier days, members of the First Order of St Francis, had initially called themselves penitents (L3C=The Legend of the Three Companions 19). Francis and his followers understood their Gospel way of life as a life of penance or ongoing conversion. In the very first sentence of his Testament Francis literally used the expression of “doing penance” (Test 1) in order to describe the new way of life he had started under the guidance of the Lord. He mentioned his encounter with lepers as the important turning point:

The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way: for when I was in sin, it seemed too bitter for me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy* to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world (Test 1-3).

This “doing penance” was an ongoing process for him in order to be faithful to the Gospel. The following definition for penance of Lapsanski, a Franciscan scholar, explains the meaning of penance in the way Franciscans understand it. Penance for them means:

to undergo the process of *metanoia*<sup>10</sup>: of turning away from one’s previous attitudes of trusting in self and turning now to God with love and confidence (Lapsanski 1976:3).

This ongoing conversion and turning to God, called penance, or *metanoia*, is central to TOR spirituality and “the root value of our tradition” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:37). Other elements of Franciscan spirituality, like prayer, poverty, simplicity and sharing, humility, minority and solidarity with the poor and marginalised, follow on from there. It is against this background and in this context that the research about the newly revised TOR Rule and its vision for Franciscan Gospel life needs to be understood.

Knowing that this TOR Rule, which was approved during the time when I entered religious life, is totally based on the writings of Francis and Clare, which in turn are rooted in the Gospel and in Sacred Scripture, motivated me to work on the TOR Rule on an academic level in a comparative study with the following research question in mind: How does the newly revised Third Order Regular Rule reflect the vision for Franciscan Gospel life? How does it reflect Franciscan spirituality?

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<sup>10</sup> *Metanoia* is the Greek term for penance, or *poenitentia* (the Latin term). Its original biblical meaning is to have a change of heart or to experience a transforming turning away from sin. A proper understanding of Franciscan spirituality requires a distinction between penance and asceticism. Asceticism comes from the Greek term *askesis* which means practice, bodily exercise or athletic training. Asceticism is usually understood as self-mortification for a higher spiritual cause. It is true that Francis and Clare used ascetical practices as a form of penance, e. g. strenuous fasting and depriving themselves of sleep. However, the meaning of penance or *metanoia* cannot be limited to ascetical practices.

In order to answer these questions the examination or analysis of the Rule will take the following perspectives into consideration: How does the newly revised Rule relate to the original writings of Francis and Clare? Does this Rule have relevance and importance for TOR members in the Church and the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How does this Rule relate to contemporary Church documents?

## 1.2 The aim of the dissertation

The examination of the newly revised TOR Rule has as its background the writings of Francis and Clare with Sacred Scripture as their seminal source. The aim is to bring to light the centuries old Franciscan vision of Gospel living in the footsteps of Christ, even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It aims at demonstrating the Rule's relevance for the present times by discussing some rather surprising similarities and parallels with contemporary Church documents which might not have been expected. An instructive example of this is to be found in the Vatican II document on religious life, the *Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life, Perfectae Caritatis* (PC<sup>1</sup>), which states: "Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all institutes as the highest rule" (PC<sup>1</sup> 2a).<sup>11</sup> Likewise the following phrases have been a constant stream running through the writings of Francis for 800 years now: "to follow the teaching and the footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ" (ER=Earlier Rule I, 1) and "[to] live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel" (Test 14).<sup>12, 13</sup> These are also found in the newly revised TOR Rule 1.1 as mentioned above in Chapter 1.1. Before the time of Francis, religious life was seen rather as an imitation of the life of the Apostles or based on the life of the primitive Church in Jerusalem. Esser (1913-1978), an eminent German Franciscan scholar, explains:

The life according to the Gospel is thus for Francis more than the imitation of the Apostles. It is the following of the way of Christ: 'to follow His footsteps'. He orientates himself neither by the life of the Apostles, nor by the life of the primitive Christian community in Jerusalem, but by what the God-Man Jesus Christ lived and did on earth (1970:213).

Further affirmation of the Franciscan way of following in the footsteps of Christ according to the form of the Holy Gospel is implicit in the important document on religious life which was

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<sup>11</sup> Vatican II (1962-1965) was a Council of Catholic bishops from all over the world for the purpose of the renewal of the Church. This year the Church celebrates 50 years of Vatican II.

<sup>12</sup> The way of life Francis set before his followers was "to follow the teaching and the footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ", in Latin: "*Domini nostri Jesu Christi doctrinam et vestigia*" (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:10).

<sup>13</sup> The Earlier Rule (ER): *Regula non bullata*; This Rule of 1221 for the Friars Minor (Lesser Brothers), the First Order of St Francis, was not yet approved by a papal bull (document). The Friars Minor today live according to the Later Rule (LR), the *Regula bullata*, which was approved by a papal bull in 1223.

formulated by the world Synod of Bishops at Rome in 1994.<sup>14</sup> The document was published in 1996 under the authority of Pope John Paul II as the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation known as the *Vita Consecrata* (VC). The document reflects on the gift of consecrated life and its mission in the Church and in the world. A comparison between the newly revised TOR Rule, based on the centuries old writings of Francis and Clare, and the *Vita Consecrata* shows that both emphasise the importance of religious to be prophetic witnesses to Christ to the world today.

The words of Francis in his *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (=1LtF=First Letter to the Faithful) serve as a Prologue to the newly revised TOR Rule. Again they resemble the witnessing of Christ when Francis calls those who do penance mothers who give birth to Christ through their holy life:

We are mothers when we carry Him in our heart and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others (1LtF I, 10).

The Second African Synod, after meeting at Rome in 2009, published a document “on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace”, *Africae Munus* (AM) of 2011, which took on the following motto of the Gospel:

You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world (Mt 5:13-14).

A paragraph in this document concerning consecrated persons reads:

Through the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience, the life of consecrated persons becomes a prophetic witness. Hence they can be examples in the area of reconciliation, justice and peace, even in circumstances marked by great tension (AM 117).

Another aim of the research is to point out the connectedness between this document and the TOR Rule in regard to the Franciscan approach to promoting dialogue and peace and solidarity with the poor and marginalised as part of the Franciscan mission.

Finally this examination of the newly revised TOR Rule should serve as a contribution to creating a resource book for the members of the Third Order Regular of St Francis here in South Africa. This resource book should provide TOR members with information on the essence of Franciscan spirituality, together with the historical

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<sup>14</sup> Synod is a Greek term for “walking together”. When Vatican II was drawing to a close Pope Paul VI established the Synod of Bishops which was to gather in subsequent meetings to foster unity and collaboration with the Pope among the bishops from all over the world. The respective bishops meet at set times in Rome to discuss important Church matters and Her mission in reading and responding to the signs of the times. These Synods develop documents which require the approval of the Pope before they are published as Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations.



development of the Third Order Regular and its Rule as well as a better understanding of the Rule based on the writings of Francis and Clare. It should show the relevance of the Third Order Regular of St Francis today, taking contemporary Church documents into consideration, and bring to light a vision for Franciscan Gospel life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This resource book could also be a useful tool for formators, for those who guide those brothers and sisters of the TOR communities who are still in initial formation.<sup>15</sup> It could also provide information for ongoing formation programmes, whether in the respective Third Order Regular communities or together with brothers and sisters from different TOR congregations and institutes.

### **1.3 Development of the design and methodology**

The methodology of my research will primarily comprise: a review of literature based on reading and discussing Franciscan spirituality – first, in view of its development in medieval times, then in terms of the history and the documents related to the Third Order Regular of St Francis and its Rule. The writings of Francis and Clare will be the foundation for this dissertation and will have the highest preference in this regard, because the TOR Rule is completely based on them. Thus, the first part of my analysis of the Rule will concern the relationship of the Rule to the original writings of Francis and the complementary passages in the writings of Clare.

This will lead to the second part of the analysis of the Rule, its application and relevance for the TOR members in the Church and the world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This involves reading contemporary Church documents on the Church and religious life in particular, including documents of Vatican II and Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortations and comparing the similarities and parallels to the TOR Rule. It also includes reading about Franciscan spirituality as discerned by contemporary Franciscan writers.

### **1.4 Scope or demarcation of the dissertation**

This is a dissertation of limited scope. The focus of my study will be a textual examination of the Third Order Regular Rule of St Francis (from 1982) as described in 1.3 and its relationship to Franciscan life today. It will also provide some brief history about the origins of the Franciscan Order, particularly the Third Order Regular and its Rule.

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<sup>15</sup> Religious formation is described in The Code of Canon Law (CIC cc. 646-661).

## 1.5 Literature review

### 1.5.1 Crucial literature on Franciscan spirituality

In order to achieve a sound understanding of Franciscan spirituality it is important to go right back to its foundation, to the Gospel experience and radical Gospel life of Francis and Clare of Assisi. Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Franciscan scholars are convinced that it is of utmost importance to examine Francis's and Clare's own writings so as to really understand them and the Franciscan Gospel life.<sup>16</sup>

Two eminent German Franciscans, Esser & Hardick (1982:7), write in their foreword to the first edition (1951) of the German translation of the writings of Francis that Francis's own writings naturally play a very important role in revealing his spirit. They mention that it is Francis himself who speaks in his writings and not what others have written about him. Armstrong, Hellmann & Short (1999/2001:13), in agreement with the German Franciscan scholars, write in the general introduction to the English edition of the writings of Francis: "It would seem appropriate for Francis's own writings to be the most valuable source for discovering him". The writings reveal to us the depth of Francis's life in its being centred in Christ and the Gospel.

The same approach applies to the writings of Clare. Her writings are foundational for the study of Franciscan spirituality today for the reason that although she shared the same charism with Francis, she expressed it in a different way. Francis and Clare could be seen as "two sides of the same coin", sharing the same charism but expressing it in two different ways.

However, soon after Francis's death his writings had already been ignored. There might have been various reasons for this. It could have been that his life and his personality had a greater impact on his followers than did his writings. Another point of view indicates that Francis's writings were soon considered to be too simple (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:13). While they reveal to us his "poetic sensitivity", they are also evidence of "the limits of his education and the simplicity of his vocabulary" (:13).

"Until the work of Esser [...] Francis's writings had been overlooked" (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:13), except *The Testament* (Test) and *The Later Rule* (LR) (:35) which were known to the Friars Minor. Manselli (1989:44) describes *The Testament* (Test) as "a synthesis

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<sup>16</sup> The writings of Francis are to be found in Armstrong, Hellmann & Short (1999/2001:40-167). The German text is in Berg & Lehmann (2009:11-144). The writings of Clare are to be found in Armstrong (2006:43-67; 108-126; 420-421). These are the four *Letters to Blessed Agnes of Prague* (1LAg, 2LAg, 3LAg, 4LAg), *The Letter to Ermentrude of Bruges* (LEr), *The Form of Life* (FLCl), *The Testament* (TestCl) and *The Blessing* (BCl). The German text of Clare's writings is to be found in Grau & Schlosser (2001).

of spirituality”, I would say Franciscan spirituality, as it contains Francis’s own experience and gives guidance to the brothers. Esser was very influential in bringing the writings of Francis back to the surface and by the time of his death “Francis’s writings entered profoundly into the consciousness of men and women all over the world” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:39).<sup>17</sup> Writings such as *The Admonitions* (Adm), *The Letters to the Faithful* (1LtF, 2 LtF) and the letters to his brothers became of value because Franciscans realised that they clearly reflect Francis’s spirit (:35).<sup>18</sup> *The Admonitions* are sometimes called “The Franciscan Beatitudes” because they are a reflection of the content of the Beatitudes from the Gospel.

Esser (in Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:10) believes that Francis himself wanted his writings to be taken seriously because they are full of citations and themes from the Gospel and Sacred Scripture. His writings reveal his “Gospel-centered vision” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:13) and the fact that he was “most in touch with the word of God” (:13).

Francis did not want his Brothers to change the content of his writings and he asked them to preserve his writings, to copy them and to distribute them.<sup>19</sup> Another renowned German Franciscan scholar, Grau (1915-1998), concludes with Hardick that Francis himself thought of his writings as being very important (Hardick & Grau 1982:23).

Moreover, this research also includes the study of various biographies which are medieval writings about the life of Francis, particularly *The Life of St Francis by Thomas of Celano* (1C) and *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (2C), also by Thomas of Celano.<sup>20</sup> Thomas of Celano belonged to the Friars Minor during the time of Francis and “was the first to write a life of Saint Francis and the first to describe the earliest days of the life of his followers” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:171).<sup>21</sup> He was asked to do so by Pope Gregory IX shortly before the canonisation of Francis in 1228 (:171-172). These medieval writings on the lives of saints are known as hagiographic literature (:175-176) and their purpose was to promote a saint among the people, at the same time presenting a model of holiness and heroic virtue that would edify the reader (Curren 2003, September).<sup>22</sup> In his first biography of Francis, Thomas of Celano deepens the traditional hagiographic method, “the

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<sup>17</sup> Kajetan Esser OFM died on 10 July 1978.

<sup>18</sup> *The Letters to the Faithful* are also known today as the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* and the *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*.

<sup>19</sup> 1LtF 20-22; 2LtF 88; *The First Letter to the Custodians* (1LtCus 9-10); *The Second Letter to the Custodians* (2LtCus 6-7); *A Letter to the Rulers of the Peoples* (LtR 8-9); *A Letter to a Minister* (LtMin 21); *A Letter to the Entire Order* (LtOrd 47-48); ER 24, 4; Test 37-39.

<sup>20</sup> *The Life of Saint Francis by Thomas of Celano* (1C) is commonly referred to as *The First Life* (*Vita Prima*) and *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (2C) is commonly referred to as *The Second Life* (*Vita Secunda*).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas of Celano died in 1260.

<sup>22</sup> Hagiography is a Greek term which comes from (*h*)*agios*, which means “saint” or “holy”, and *graphein*, which means “to write”. Hagiography refers to writings on saints or to biographies of saints.

moralizing and edification”, by including specific historical information (Prinzivalli 2001:264; Armstrong et al 1999/2001:175-176, 178).<sup>23</sup> In his prologue, Celano declares that he wrote down what he himself heard from Francis, as an eyewitness, and from what he “learned from trustworthy and esteemed witnesses” (1C, Prologue 1). Celano’s main aim was to present “Francis as a model of conversion in order to express the unique gospel message of Francis’s life” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:176). Contemporary Franciscan scholars consider the biographies by Thomas of Celano as the most important and foundational source of the life of Francis after his own writings (Grau 1988:7; Armstrong et al 1999/2001:171), the first biography (1C) being the “primary source” (:176; Berg & Lehmann 2009:169) and “taking a place of honor” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:173).

In writing *The Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul* (2C), known as *The Second Life*, Thomas of Celano had to take into account problems arising in the fraternity itself (Prinzivalli 2001:259). This work is a synthesis of all information available concerning the life of Francis at that time and is a rich source for the history and inner situation of the fraternity in the middle of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Grau 1988:47). Finally, Grau (:30) concludes, concerning the hagiographic writings about Francis, that the three works of Thomas of Celano (1C, 2C, 3C=The Treatise on the Miracles) are considered the most important sources about the life of Francis and his brothers.

For centuries the source for Francis’s life and spirit came neither from his own writings nor from Celano’s works, but from *The Major Legend by Bonaventure* (LMj). Bonaventure (1218/1221-1274) was a great doctor and saint of the Franciscan Order. Although he did not know Francis personally (Prinzivalli 2001:281), he was asked by the General Chapter in 1260 to “revise the historical-theological figure of Francis by writing a new official legend” (:282) taking into consideration those already existing (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:495).<sup>24</sup> The Chapter in 1266 acknowledged Bonaventure’s work “as a hagiographical and theological masterpiece” (:495). Celano’s texts, which were the original sources for the life of Francis and the early spirituality of the fraternity, were modified in this way (Grau 1988:57-58). After this, Celano’s works disappeared for centuries, but are once more of utmost value in having been rediscovered.

The biography on Clare’s life, *The Legend of St Clare* (LC1), is another basic source for forming a more complete picture of Franciscan spirituality and the different ways it is

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<sup>23</sup> Celano even includes a “physical description of Francis (1C 83)”, which is unusual for hagiographic writing and “medieval historiography” (Prinzivalli 2001:264).

<sup>24</sup> In 1260 the Friars Minor met at Assisi for a General Chapter in order to discuss matters concerning their religious order.

expressed.<sup>25</sup> Pope Alexander IX had asked to have the life of Clare written down as required by the canonization process in the Middle Ages (Grau 1988:51; Armstrong 1993:246). *The Legend of St Clare* “is based on interviews with those who personally knew Clare or the Poor Ladies of San Damiano and *The Acts of the Process of Canonization*” (PC<sup>2</sup>) (:246). Also *The Acts of the Process of Canonization* are fundamental in order to understand Clare’s spirituality.<sup>26</sup>

The writings of Francis and Clare and the medieval writings about their lives mentioned above are the most crucial in discerning Franciscan spirituality.

### **1.5.2 Literature on Franciscan spirituality and its development in medieval times**

Some rather contemporary literature became a useful tool for my research as well.

In order to determine the essence of Franciscan spirituality and to examine its development in the early times I also used Lapsanski’s (1976) book, *The first Franciscans and the Gospel*. He places the Franciscan movement in the historical context of the many zealous Christians who put effort in renewing the Church during the hundred and fifty years preceding the time of Francis (Lapsanski 1976:xxiii). He then describes the experience of God and being inspired by God as the foundation of the Friars’ Gospel life. His work is completely based on the writings of Francis and deals with the very essence of Franciscan Gospel life and for this reason is a very valuable source for this research.

Both Southern (1986) in *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* and Lawrence (1994) in *The Friars, The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* became very useful sources for understanding the Franciscan movement in the context of the historical, socio-cultural and ecclesiastical background of the Middle Ages.

### **1.5.3 Literature on the history of the Third Order Regular of St Francis and its Rule**

Moorman’s (1968/1988) *The History of the Franciscan Order: from its Origins to the Year 1517* is well recognized as an authoritative history of the Franciscan Order and its relationship with the First, Second and Third Order of St Francis. My particular interest for the purposes of this dissertation concerns the Third Order Regular.

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<sup>25</sup> Grau (1988:51) mentions Thomas of Celano as the author of *The Legend of St Clare* (LC1), but the authorship of *The Legend of St Clare* is disputed today (Armstrong 2006:275).

<sup>26</sup> Before Francis’s canonization, there was no formal investigation - as there was when Clare was to be canonized.

Pazzelli's (1993) work on the history of the Third Order Regular of St Francis and its Rule, *The Franciscan Sisters*, comprises detailed information and covers the time from the beginning to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Carney, Godet-Calogeras & Kush (2008) compiled the *History of the Third Order Regular Rule: A Source Book*, incorporating the historical documents on the TOR. It also demonstrates the process of compiling the newly revised TOR Rule in detail. It is a valuable source because it contains all the historical documents concerning the TOR Rule, from the beginning to the present day. The work also includes a collection of English commentaries, early commentaries and contemporary commentaries on the present Rule.

#### **1.5.4 Literature on the newly revised TOR Rule and its relationship to the writings of Francis and Clare**

Hardick (1987) wrote a German commentary on this TOR Rule, *Unsere Regel – Unser Leben*, based on his profound knowledge about the writings of Francis and the Franciscan sources. His work is thus considered as a source of great value for demonstrating the relationship between the newly revised TOR Rule and the writings of Francis and Clare. Hardick was himself greatly involved in the discussions, consultations and proposals regarding the development of the text of the newly revised TOR Rule.

The American-English Commentary written by Carney & Horgan (1982/1997), *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St. Francis and Commentary*, is important because Carney & Horgan were members of the International Work Group on the Rule. Their commentary provides us with fundamental background information on the text which places this early commentary in a privileged position.

In this paper I will use the new English translation of the TOR Rule to be found alongside the original Latin text - *Regula et Vita Fratrum et Sororum Tertii Ordinis Regularis Sancti Francisci* – in Carney et al (2008:308-335). There are two previous English translations of this Rule, in Carney & Horgan (1982:6-55) and in Carney & Horgan (1982/1997:13-29). Horgan originally translated the Rule from Latin into English. The original Latin and official text of the Rule originated from Godet-Calogeras. In the 1997 edition Godet-Calogeras and Carney had worked on a translation of the Rule in inclusive language. The aim of the newest English translation (Carney et al 2008) is to improve the English rendition of the Latin.

### **1.5.5 Literature on the application of the newly revised TOR Rule for Franciscan Gospel life today**

In order to demonstrate the Rule's application and vision for Franciscan Gospel life in the Church and the world of today, it will be essential to include a comparison of the TOR Rule with contemporary Church documents. My focus will be on two Post-Synodal Exhortations. These include the 1996 Exhortation on the consecrated life and its mission, *Vita Consecrata* (VC) and the 2011 Exhortation on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace, *Africae Munus* (AM), a document published after the Second Synod for Africa. These Post-Synodal Exhortations have been selected for comparison with the TOR Rule because of their insight into and understanding of the contemporary Church's approach to religious life and its mission. This mission includes service to reconciliation, justice and peace for the Church in Africa.

The *Franciscan Study Guide Series on The Third Order – SFO and TOR* (2004), issued by Wroblewski & Karecki of the Franciscan Institute of Southern Africa, provides a condensed history on the Third Order Regular and applies its charism to the present situation.

*Greyfriars Review* is a journal that extends to the English-speaking world and is a valuable source for contemporary Franciscan theology, spirituality and history. The articles of Micó (1993-1997) on Franciscan spirituality published in that journal are most valuable for Franciscan studies in general for they also include the different elements of that spirituality in the context of the historical and socio-economical background and its application to the present time.

## 2. Franciscan spirituality and its development in medieval times

The radical Gospel life and Christo-centrism of Francis and Clare of Assisi in medieval times ushered in a major trend in Western spirituality towards devotion to the humanity of Christ with an emphasis on the imitation of Christ. Franciscan spirituality was born out of Francis's and Clare's experience of God and their love of the Christ of the Gospel, especially the poor and suffering Christ.

In the course of time an emphasis on different images of Christ had developed. Before the time of Francis, in the early Middle Ages, Western spirituality had emphasised "Christ [...] the Victor crowned by God [and] the victorious Emperor and Ruler" (Lapsanski 1976:46), or Christ "the risen Lord or eternal Logos rather than the humanity of Jesus" (Sheldrake 1991/1995:204).

The devotion to the humanity of Christ gradually developed since Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and especially through Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Benedictine monk Anselm of Canterbury had made a notable contribution to this devotion through his *Prayers and Meditations* (Ward 1985/2000:196), and his reflections on the Passion of Christ (:199). Bernard of Clairvaux, the famous Cistercian monk, abbot and reformer of monastic life, was a distinguished exponent of the devotion to the humanity of Christ (Sheldrake 1991/1995:204). "Christo-centrism, the mysteries of the Incarnate Word, devotion to Our Lady and love of the Church" were significant to his spirituality (Micó 1993a:9).

For that reason, the development of Franciscan spirituality cannot be seen isolated from the background of medieval spirituality with its tendency towards Christo-centrism. Franciscan spirituality needs to be understood against the historical, socio-cultural and ecclesiastical background of the Middle Ages.

Christian spirituality of the early Middle Ages had been dominated by the monastic way of life, "which was understood as a common life of prayer, study, and work" (Schneiders 1985/2000:14-15). When monastic life and the life of the clergy became lax and the economy and the towns grew immensely, especially in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Church experienced "a deep desire to return to the origins of Christianity" (Micó 1993a:5). For that reason, monks, clerics and lay people (men and women) were drawn to the eremitical life of strict poverty after the example of the Desert Fathers (:5, 12). Norbert of Xanten (1080/1085-1134), for example, retired from his life as a canon in Cologne to take on a life of silence, prayer and poverty as a hermit-preacher, travelling from one place to the other, "denouncing the laxity of morals among the clergy and laity" (Aumann 1985:116-117). In the first half of



the 12<sup>th</sup> century many hermits acted as wandering preachers (Micó 1993a:13) and were in that way a foreshadowing of the mendicant orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> These wandering preachers lived the Gospel literally and in fidelity to the Church, as the Franciscan friars did later (Lapsanski 1976:28, 55).

Another important development in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century was the rise of the Regular Canons who gathered as communities of priests and deacons to follow a rule. They gradually all took the Rule of St Augustine (354-430). By their community life in poverty, they sought to recover the life of the early church (Acts 4:32; 2:41-45) in those days where the clergy had become lax and “monasticism began to experience [a] generalized fatigue and staleness” (Micó 1993a:10). The life of the Regular Canons was known as the *vita canonica* (also known as the *vita apostolica*, which was a life based on the experience of the early church). It was characteristic to their spirituality that they combined the monastic way of life with pastoral ministry, facing and responding to the needs of the time. In 1120, following his life as a hermit-preacher, Norbert of Xanten founded a community of Regular Canons at Prémontré in which the monastic life and the pastoral ministry were combined. He thus served as a forerunner in preparing the way for the mendicant communities of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Aumann 1985:117-118).

Robert of Molesme (c. 1028-1111) had founded the Cistercian Order in Cîteaux in 1098 “to restore the strict observance of the Benedictine Rule and so follow more closely the Christ of the Gospel in simplicity and poverty” (Micó 1993a:15). The Cistercians wanted to renew monastic life and they emphasised the imitation of Christ himself as the focus of their spirituality. Through their “devotion to the person of Jesus” (Southern 1986:273) the Franciscans came to be their “spiritual heirs” (:252).

The 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were also marked by a great mobility of the people in the West. Their spiritual thirst led to pilgrimages to the holy shrines especially in Jerusalem, Rome and Santiago de Compostela. Pilgrimages and Crusades were also seen as a way of doing penance and atoning for sins (Micó 1993a:19) which led to the “[d]evotion to the human Christ, [which was] a general characteristic of spirituality at this time” (Sheldrake 1991/1995:153-154). Through the contact with the Holy Land and through the preaching of the wandering hermits, the Gospel became more central to people’s lives. “The idea of Gospel life now took the form of absolute poverty and direct access to the Gospels

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<sup>27</sup> The term mendicant comes from the Latin term *mendicans* which means begging. Although it refers to relying on charitable donations, the Franciscan friars had to rely for support on their own work first before they were allowed to go for begging (Test 22; ER IX, 1).

themselves as the intercessory word of God which urged that it be preached” (Micó 1993a:20).

Different Gospel movements also known as penitential movements, religious poverty movements or *pauperes Christi* emerged in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. For them “[t]he authentic apostolic life was seen to be one modelled upon the earthly life of Jesus, as it was revealed in the Gospels – the imitation of Christ” (Lawrence 1994:17).

Peter Waldes (c. 1140-c.1217) for example, a merchant, gave his possessions to the poor in 1175 and started “to live and preach the Gospel” (Micó 1993a:24). Men and women joined him and became known as the *Waldensians*, or *Poor Men of Lyon*. Living the Gospel by a life of poverty and preaching, they also begged for their living (Lawrence 1994:19-23). They believed that their living according to the Gospel validated their preaching without needing the permission of the Church (Micó 1993a:22), and so they “pilloried the moral shortcomings of the clergy and ridiculed their lack of education” (Lawrence 1994:21). They also translated the Gospels and the Psalter into their vernacular language (:20), which was not favoured by the Church authorities at that time (Sheldrake 1991/1995:163). All of this led to the point of not acknowledging the sacramental power of the unworthy clergy, resulting in the *Waldensians* being counted among the heretics (Micó 1993a:25). Later on a group of them returned to the Church and was reconciled by Pope Innocent III (Lawrence 1994:23).

Also in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, another group of lay people appeared, known as the *Humiliati*. While the married members of the group stayed with their families, the unmarried ones lived in community. They lived a simple life, doing manual work and encouraging each other to follow the Gospel (Micó 1993a:24). Though they were at first counted among the heretics, they were reconciled with the Church by Pope Innocent III in the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Lawrence 1994:23).<sup>28</sup>

Groups of “pious women” known as the *Beguines* (Micó 1993a:24) emerged at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. They lived a life of prayer in community or in private houses, doing manual work and dedicating themselves to works of mercy. *Beguine* life also expressed an emphasis on the humanity of Christ (Sheldrake 1991/1995:79, 152-153), with a concentration on the Eucharist and the Passion of Christ (:154). C. Bynum (in Raitt 1987/2001:xviii) says that “for the first time in Christian history, we can identify a women’s movement [...] and can speak of specifically female influences on the development of piety.” The emphasis and

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<sup>28</sup> However, Pius V finally suppressed the *Humiliati* in 1571 in reaction to their accumulation of material possessions and their involvement in a conspiracy to murder St Charles Borromeo (1538-1584), Archbishop of Milan, who had been directed by Pius V to address the situation.

devotion to the human Christ generally led to a spirituality in which poor people were identified with the suffering Christ and were not simply objects of charity (Micó 1993a:23).

The *Penitents* (not yet the Franciscan Penitents) mostly lived in their own homes and could also be counted among the Gospel movements although they were not strictly organized. As with the other evangelical movements, the *Penitents* lived a life of poverty, practised penance and were devoted to works of mercy (Micó 1993a:24).

The rise of the Franciscan Order in the 13<sup>th</sup> century thus cannot be seen apart from the medieval spirituality in general which was marked by Christo-centrism. The way for the Franciscan Order was paved by the Christ-centred spirituality of the wandering preachers, by the rise of the Regular Canons, who combined pastoral work with the monastic way of life, by the Cistercians who wanted to follow the Christ of the Gospel in poverty, and by the Gospel movements of the time.

Before dealing with the Franciscan Order, or the mendicant Orders, it is necessary to mention the *Cathars*, or *Albigensians*, a group of doctrinal heretics. As dualists the *Cathars* believed that the world came forth from a principle of good and a principle of evil – that God created the spiritual world while the material world came from the evil source. Consequently they rejected the sacraments and did not believe in the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ (Lawrence 1994:4). The significance of the *Cathars* is to be found in the serious problem they posed for the Church in rejecting fundamental doctrines. The mendicant orders were an ‘orthodox’ response to this clearly heretical movement (Micó 1993a:26).

The origins of the mendicant Orders, the Friars, go back to their founders Dominic (c.1170-1221) and Francis of Assisi. Dominic founded the Order of Preachers and Francis, the Order of Friars Minor. Dominic originally was an Augustinian Canon from Spain. After he learned of the failure of three Cistercian abbots to convert the *Albigensian* heretics it became clear to him that the former failed because of their pomp (Southern 1986:280). The Cistercians, who wanted to follow Christ in poverty, had moved away from their ideal already in the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century (Micó 1993a:17). Dominic felt that a simple lifestyle and the return to the apostolic life – the *vita apostolica* – were needed in order to convert the heretics. Although the Augustinian Canons had taken their inspiration from the *vita apostolica*, their evangelical work had been submerged in the course of time and some communities once again adopted monastic observances (Southern 1986:280; Micó 1993a:15). Dominic brought pastoral work back to the surface and founded the Order of *Friars Preachers* in 1216. “[I]t aimed at combating the heresy through preaching reinforced by a primitive simplicity of apostolic life” (Southern 1986:280).

According to Lapsanski (1976:xxiv) Francis and Dominic may be seen as the high point of this long effort of renewal from the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> until the beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Franciscan movement did not aim at a reform of the Church as such, but tried “purely and simply to renew that form of life which the Lord had recommended in the Gospel to his disciples and Apostles” (Esser 1970:250). It is centred on Christ and centred on the Gospel (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:12). Franciscan spirituality is distinctive in being centred on the *kenotic* Christ (:12; Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:111). The Christo-centrism of the time, which “is the hallmark of all medieval spirituality” (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:111), especially from the time of Bernard of Clairvaux onward, culminated in Francis and Clare and the Franciscan Gospel way of life.

## **2.1 The foundation of Franciscan Gospel life in the footsteps of Christ**

Franciscan spirituality originates from Francis’s and Clare’s experience of God and their love of the Christ of the Gospel, especially the poor and suffering Christ (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:20; Lapsanski 1976:1-6). Francis and Clare discovered God’s overwhelming love for us particularly in the *kenosis* of Christ, in his self-giving, his poverty and humility. Their response was a compelling one, and this was to follow Christ wholeheartedly and in total surrender, “[participating] in his *kenotic* love” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:20).

Francis tells us right in the beginning of his Testament (Test 1-3) that it was the Lord who led him among lepers in order to begin his life of penance. Through his encounter with the leper “in whom both poverty and sorrow were united” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:13) Francis also experienced a personal encounter with Christ (:13; 2C 9) that began a process of conversion and transformation that led him and urged him “to follow the Son of God along the path of the Gospel” (Micó 1993c:271). It was through this experience with the leper (2C 9) that Francis came to know about and encountered the poor and crucified Christ, the *kenotic* Christ, whom he felt compelled to follow. Francis was very much aware that the Lord himself had led him into this experience which resulted in his following Christ. The first sentence of his Testament reads: “The Lord gave me, Brother Francis, thus to begin doing penance in this way [...]” (Test 1) and then he describes his encounter with lepers saying:

And the Lord Himself led me among them and *I showed mercy* to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world (Test 2-3).

After meeting the leper, Francis encountered the poor and suffering Christ in the church of San Damiano. Celano writes that

[t]he image of Christ crucified spoke to him. ‘Francis,’ it said, calling him by name, ‘go rebuild My house; as you see, it is all being destroyed.’ [...] From that time on, compassion for the Crucified was impressed into his holy soul (2C 10).

Francis then literally started to rebuild church buildings, beginning with San Damiano, probably San Pietro and then the Portiuncula (1C 21-22). One day in the Portiuncula he heard a Gospel reading that gave him a deeper understanding of how he was to follow Christ, compelling him to leave behind all possessions and preach “the kingdom of God and penance” (1C 22; Mt 10:9-10; Lk 9:2; Mk 6:12).<sup>29</sup>

When Francis and the first brothers wanted to find out the will of God for their community, they took guidance from three Gospel texts which they found by opening the Gospel book in San Nicolò in Assisi three times (L3C 28, 29; AP=The Anonymus of Perugia 11): The first passage was about forsaking all possessions, giving one’s money to the poor, and then following Christ (Mt 19:21). The second passage was about taking “nothing for the journey” (Lk 9:3) and the third was about renouncing self and taking up the cross to follow Christ (Mt 16:24). Besides taking on a life of strict poverty and itinerant preaching, another important and central element was introduced, namely to follow the crucified Christ whom he had encountered in San Damiano and also in the leper.

After reading the three Gospel passages, Francis said to his companions:

Brothers, this is our life and rule and that of all who will want to join our company. Go, therefore, and fulfil what you have heard (L3C 29).

In this way the Gospel became their rule and life which in turn became synonymous terms which Francis himself confirms in his *Testament* (14-15) - that the life according to the form of the Gospel became the brothers’ rule:

And after the Lord gave me some brothers, no one showed me what to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me (Test 14-15).

Francis refers here to the primitive Rule, the Rule of 1209 which is no longer known to us today. Also in the Prologue of the *Earlier Rule* (ER) which followed the primitive document, Francis describes the Rule as “life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ” (ER Prologue, 2):

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<sup>29</sup> According to tradition this took place on the feast of the apostle St Matthias (Armstrong, Hellmann & Short 1999/2001:201<sup>d</sup>).

This is the life of the Gospel of Jesus Christ that Brother Francis petitioned the Lord Pope to grant and confirm for him (ER Prologue, 2).

In Chapter 1 of the *Earlier Rule* he continues:

The rule and life of these brothers is this, namely: “to live in obedience, in chastity, and without anything of their own,” and to follow the teaching and footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who says: *If you wish to be perfect, go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, [...] and come, follow me. And: If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me* (ER I, 1-3).<sup>30</sup>

The Gospel as rule and life also requires the person to follow in the footsteps of Christ by living a life of strict poverty and taking up one’s cross to follow him.

Here emerge certain parallels to the itinerant (wandering) preachers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century who also tried to live the Gospel literally by observing strict poverty, going about the countryside preaching penance (Lapsanski 1976:xxiii, 28, 55) and following the poor and suffering Christ (:55). In their own way, and ahead of Francis, they desired to live this Gospel life in fidelity to the Church (:28).

The main difference between the Franciscan movement and the Gospel movements (*pauperes Christi*) of the time was that the latter were not too concerned about a life in obedience to the Church. In addition, the *pauperes Christi* concentrated mainly on one aspect of the Gospel, “namely Christ’s ‘missionary’ discourse to his apostles” (Lapsanski 1976:33), while Francis was committed to living the “whole” Gospel as shown in the numerous Gospel references and themes in Francis’s writings, especially in his *Admonitions* (Adm) and in the *Earlier Rule* (ER) of 1221. For Francis the observance of the “whole” Gospel centred on the fulfilment of the great commandment of love of God and neighbour (Lapsanski 1976:34). His *Admonition XIV* (Adm XVI) about poverty in spirit, for example, brings out very intensely that evangelical poverty is not just about renouncing possessions, but also about a great love of neighbour:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

There are many who, while insisting on prayers and obligations, inflict many abstinences and punishments upon their bodies. But they are immediately offended and disturbed about a single word which seems to be harmful to their bodies or about something which might be taken away from them. These people are not poor in spirit, for someone who is truly poor in spirit hates himself and loves those who strike him on the cheek (Adm XIV).

The love Francis had for others, even sinners, differs from the attitude of some individuals of his time who were concerned only with the missionary aspect; in their arrogance and “holier-

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<sup>30</sup> Mt 19:21; Lk 18:22; Mt 16:24.

than-thou attitude” (Lapsanski 1976:34) they lost sight of this true love of the Gospel. Esser summarizes this abundant love Francis had in the following way:

And this love Francis gave to his age: love of God, love of the God-Man Jesus Christ, love of his mother; love for Christ’s work of salvation, love of his Incarnation, Passion and Eucharist; love for the Church and for all men, even for sinners and unbelievers. Before the radiance of this love, darkness disappeared (in Lapsanski 1976:34).

Francis and Clare were deeply touched by the humility of Christ’s Incarnation and by the charity of his Passion. Celano writes about Francis: “Indeed, so thoroughly did the humility of the Incarnation and the charity of the Passion occupy his memory that he scarcely wanted to think of anything else” (1C 84). Three years before his death, in deep reverence Francis recalled the birth of Christ in Greccio (:84-87). Francis identified so deeply with the crucified Christ that he, by the grace of God, received the Stigmata on Mount La Verna two years before he died (:94-96).

The humility and poverty of Christ’s Incarnation, of his labours and burdens for our redemption and the compassion he showed for us through his suffering on the cross moved Clare’s heart, too. Consequently Clare advises Blessed Agnes of Prague (1200-1282) in her fourth letter (4LAg=The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes of Prague 15-27) to look daily into the “mirror” of the life of Christ and to contemplate his image, the poor, suffering and loving Lord:

Look, I say, at the border of this mirror, that is, the poverty of Him Who was placed in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes. O marvelous humility! O astonishing poverty! The King of angels, the Lord of heaven and earth, is *laid in a manger!*  
Then reflect upon, at the surface of the mirror, the holy humility, at least the blessed poverty, the untold labors and punishments that He endured for the redemption of the whole human race. Finally contemplate, in the depth of this same mirror, the ineffable charity that He chose to suffer on the tree of the Cross and to die there the most shameful kind of death (4LAg 19-23).

Through this contemplation, Clare tells Agnes, she should be so inflamed with love for Christ (4LAg 27) that further contemplation of his “ineffable delights, eternal riches and perpetual honors” (:28) will draw her into a loving union with him (:29-32).

In his *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (2LtF) Francis uses “concrete incarnational expressions” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:46<sup>a</sup>) to really emphasise the humility of the Incarnation:

The most high Father made known from heaven through His holy angel Gabriel this Word of the Father – so worthy, so holy and glorious – in the womb of the holy and glorious Virgin Mary, from whose womb He received the flesh of our humanity and frailty. Though He was

rich, He wished, together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, to choose poverty in the world beyond all else (2LtF 4-5).<sup>31</sup>

Francis wanted to make clear to the faithful this *kenosis* of Christ, that in spite of being rich, the Word became flesh and took on our human frailty in the womb of the Virgin Mary, whom he honoured. He then continues to express Christ's self-giving in the Passover, in the agony of the garden, in obedience to the will of the Father until he sacrificed himself on the cross:

And as His Passion was near, He celebrated the Passover with His disciples and, taking bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, saying: *Take and eat: This is My Body*. And taking up the cup He said: *This is my Blood of the New Covenant which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins*. Then He prayed to His Father, saying: *Father, if it can be done, let this cup pass from me. And His sweat became as drops of blood falling on the ground*. Nevertheless, He placed His will in the will of His Father, saying: *Father, let Your will be done; not as I will, but as You will* (2LtF 6-10).<sup>32</sup>

Francis then concludes that through the Incarnation of Christ and through his sacrifice on the cross the faithful are consequently called to follow in his footsteps:

His Father's will was such that His blessed and glorious Son, Whom He gave to us and Who was born for us, should offer Himself through His own blood as a sacrifice and oblation on the altar of the cross: not for Himself through Whom all things were made, but for our sins, leaving us an example that we might follow His footsteps (2LtF 11-13).<sup>33</sup>

The call to follow the footprints of the Word made flesh was a source of deep concern for Francis. He did not have a narrow view of Christ's Passion but rather understood it as the only way to glory (Ph 2:5-11). In *The Office of the Passion* (OfP) Francis views the whole life of Christ, his incarnation, his public ministry, passion, resurrection, ascension, also his coming back in glory and his pre-existence as the Word (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:13). However, even in the *Vespers of The Office of the Passion*, in the middle of his joyful praises of the victory of the Risen Lord and the invitation for all creation to praise God for sending his Son for our salvation, Francis returns to his central concern of taking part in the mystery of Christ's passion (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:147<sup>b</sup>):

Take up your bodies and *carry* His holy *cross*\*  
and *follow* His most holy commands even to the end.  
Let the *whole earth tremble before His face*\*  
*tell among the nations that the Lord has ruled from a tree*  
(OfP, *Vespers, Psalm VII, 8-9*).<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> 2 Cor 8:9.

<sup>32</sup> Mt 26:26, 28; Lk 22:42, 44; Mt 26:39, 42.

<sup>33</sup> Jn 1:3; 1 Pt 2:21. With this catechetical writing in the so called *Second Letter to the Faithful* about the central mysteries of the Christian faith, Francis also took a stand against the heretical teachings of the Cathars who viewed the flesh as evil and therefore did not believe in the Incarnation of Christ (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:46<sup>a</sup>).

<sup>34</sup> Lk 14:27; Jn 19:17; 1 Pt 2:21; Ps 96:9-10.



Even in the *Vespers of the Lord's Birth* (OfP, Psalm XV, 13) Francis returns to his central theme of following Christ by carrying the cross and does "not neglect to reflect upon the perfection of God's love found in the cross" (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:157<sup>a</sup>).

For Francis *kenosis* was the manifestation of God's love, the self-giving and non-possessive love of God who did not cling to his glory, but gave himself for us and our salvation through his only Son, as it is written in the First letter of St. John: "This is the revelation of God's love for us that God sent his only Son into the world that we might have life through Him" (1 Jn 4:9). He so admired this *kenotic* love of God that just hearing about God's love caused transformation within himself. According to Celano, Francis said: "The love of him who loved us greatly is greatly to be loved" (2C 196). Therefore it was painful for him to experience that this Divine Love was a love that was not returned.

Francis was deeply concerned to return God's love by following in the footsteps of Christ. At the end of the *Letter to the Entire Order* (LtOrd) Francis prayed that the brothers, led by the Spirit, would be able to follow the footprints of Christ and so make their way to God, the Most High:

Almighty, eternal, just and merciful God,  
give us miserable ones  
the grace to do for You alone  
what we know you want us to do  
and always to desire what pleases You.  
Inwardly cleansed, interiorly enlightened and inflamed by the fire of the Holy Spirit,  
may we be able to follow in the footprints of Your beloved Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,  
and, by Your grace alone, may we make our way to You, Most High,  
Who live and rule in perfect Trinity and simple Unity,  
and are glorified God almighty, forever and ever. Amen (LtOrd 50-52).

This prayer is known "as *the* Franciscan Prayer" (Armstrong 1995:223). It also witnesses to Francis's love and praise of the Trinity as does the whole *Office of the Passion* and brings into focus his view of "the Trinitarian life" (:223). The "perfect Trinity and simple Unity" (LtOrd 52) of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the oneness, the not clinging to self and the perfect sharing of love among them became a model to Francis and his followers and to their way to God.

Francis admired the continuation of the *kenotic* love of Christ in the Eucharist. In his *Admonitions* Francis describes the Eucharist also as a continuation of the Incarnation (Micó 1997b:274):

Behold each day He humbles Himself as when He came *from the royal throne* into the Virgin's womb; each day He Himself comes to us, appearing humbly; each day He comes down *from the bosom of the Father* upon the altar in the hands of a priest (Adm 1, 16-18).<sup>35</sup>

Francis admires here the humility of Christ who still comes down to us in the Eucharist and even places himself "in the hands of a priest" (Adm 1, 18; LtOrd 26). The humility of Christ is coming down to us from heaven under the form of simple bread, Francis expresses in the *Letter to the Entire Order* (LtOrd 27):

O sublime humility! O humble sublimity! The Lord of the universe, God and the Son of God, so humbles Himself that for our salvation He hides Himself under an ordinary piece of bread!

In beholding the depth of God's humility in the Eucharistic bread, Francis concluded that he must follow him in poverty and total surrender (LtOrd 28-29):

Brothers, look at the humility of God and *pour out your hearts before Him!* Humble yourselves that you may be exalted by Him! Hold back nothing of yourselves for yourselves, that He Who gives Himself totally to you may receive you totally!<sup>36</sup>

In following in the footsteps of Christ and through the total surrender of herself to the Lord in her contemplative life, Clare had a special relationship to the humble and loving Lord in the Eucharist. Clare so trusted Christ in the Eucharist and his love for the sisters that when the Saracens were on their way to attack San Damiano in 1241, she had the Blessed Sacrament, which was deeply venerated there, carried in front of her. *The Legend of Saint Clare* (LCI 21-22) holds that San Damiano and Assisi were protected because of the power of her prayers.<sup>37</sup>

In deep respect and reverence for the humble presence of Christ the Son of God, Francis and Clare cared for the Eucharist in a special way. Francis begged his brothers "to show all possible reverence and honor to the most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ" (LtOrd 12-13; Test 11). He asked the Custodians of the Order to beg the clergy to do the same (1LtCus=The First Letter to the Custodians 2) because he was well aware that the churches and the Eucharist in the churches were being neglected in those days (1LtCl= The First Letter to the Clergy 1, 4-5).<sup>38</sup> Francis took care that the Eucharist would be kept in "precious places" (Test 11). He also wrote to the clergy (1LtCl 11; 2LtCl=The Second Letter to the Clergy 11) and to the Custodians of the Order that they should remind the clergy of this (1LtCus 3-4; 2LtCus=The Second Letter to the Custodians 4-5). Clare's loving devotion to

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<sup>35</sup> Phil 2:8; Wis 18:15; Jn 1:18.

<sup>36</sup> Ps 62:9; 1 Pt 5:6; Jas 4:10.

<sup>37</sup> Also in: *The Acts of the Process of Canonization* (PC<sup>2</sup> III 18, IX 2).

<sup>38</sup> The *First Letter to the Clergy* is also called *Exhortations to the Clergy* (*Earlier Edition*). The same reverence is found in the *Second Letter to the Clergy* (2LtCl 1, 4-5), also called *Exhortations to the Clergy* (*Later Edition*).

the Eucharist found expression in making precious linen and corporals for the churches around Assisi while she was already bedridden (LCI 28; BC=The Bull of Canonization 16).<sup>39</sup>

As with the Eucharist, Francis admired the humble love and continuous presence of Christ in the words of Scripture. He accordingly asked the brothers as well as the clergy to keep them “in a becoming place” (Test 12; 1LtCl 12; 2LtCl 12; LtOrd 34-37; 1LtCus 2, 5). More especially since “the sacrament of the altar is celebrated in the power of the words of Christ” (LtOrd 37; 1LtCus 2) Francis admonished the brothers and the clergy to venerate them becomingly.

Francis also believed that the *kenotic* love of Christ continues to reveal itself in the priests, whatever their weaknesses might be (Test 6-10; 2LtF 33) – unlike some of the Gospel movements of the time that did not believe in the sacramental power of the unworthy clergy (Micó 1993a:25) – and in a church of sinful people (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:14).

Francis saw the humble presence of Christ in the poor (2C 83, 85). He told his brothers that an image of Christ and his “poor mother” (:85) stands before them whenever they see a poor person.

The main points of this section can be summarised as: The *kenotic* Christ and his humble love stand at the very heart of Franciscan Christo-centrism; that it finds its very expression in his Incarnation, earthly ministry and Passion and is continued in the Eucharist, the words of Scripture, in the priests, the Church and the poor. This humble love is a call to follow in the footsteps of Christ “along the path of the Gospel” (Micó 1993c:271). The experience of God shared by Francis and Clare, which inspired them to a radical Gospel life, shaped and continues to shape Franciscan spirituality to this day.

## **2.2 The elements of Franciscan spirituality**

The Franciscan Gospel life in the footsteps of Christ founded by Francis and Clare comprises several core elements or values, namely a life of penance, of poverty and humility, life in a community characterised by minority; a life committed to a world-wide mission, a life in the Church and a life with a contemplative dimension. These elements are integral to Franciscan spirituality with penance as its “root value” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:37) of which the others flow. These elements will be examined as follows.

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<sup>39</sup> *The Bull of Canonization* is also called *The Papal Decree of Canonization*.

### 2.2.1 In a life of penance

Francis's experience of God and his love changed his life tremendously. In being touched by God and the transforming power of his sublime love, Francis drew closer to God and through this experience of the divine he could follow the call to conversion. He turned to God in his Gospel way of life, focusing especially on the *kenotic* Christ. Francis understood his radical Gospel way of life as "doing penance" (Test 1), at the same time profoundly aware that to be completely faithful to the Gospel, to this conversion, this turning to God, or *metanoia*, was an ongoing process.

Francis was always eager to promote a life of penance also among the people. In his *Earlier Rule* he asked all the brothers to encourage the people to turn to God by embracing a life of penance so that they may have life, eternal life (ER XXI, 3-9; ER XXIII, 7; also in 1LtCus 6)<sup>40</sup>:

Fear and honour, praise and bless, give *thanks* and adore the Lord God Almighty in Trinity and in  
Unity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Creator of all.  
Do penance, performing worthy fruits of penance because we shall soon die.  
*Give and it will be given to you.*  
*Forgive and you shall be forgiven.*  
*If you do not forgive people their sins, the Lord will not forgive you yours.*  
*Confess all your sins. [...]*  
Beware of and abstain from every evil  
and persevere in good till the end (ER XXI, 2-6, 9).

Francis begins this exhortation by praising and thanking the Trinity and then continues by emphasising what penance requires: To give, to forgive others, to confess all sins, to abstain from evil and to "persevere in good till the end" (ER XXI, 9), which shows again that penance, or *metanoia*, is an ongoing process. With his call to forgiveness he also promotes peace among the people.

In his *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF) and in his *Later Admonition and Exhortation* to them (2LtF), Francis encouraged particularly those penitents who came to him to share in his Gospel way of life, but were not able to enter religious life in the First or Second Order, to embrace a life of penance. These were the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance*, to be known first as the "Order of Penitents" (Pazzelli 1993:1) and by the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century as the Third Order of St Francis. As mentioned in 1.1 this Order developed into two branches, the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO), which is an Order of lay people, and the Third Order Regular (TOR), which is a vowed Order. These

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<sup>40</sup> Francis might have been also influenced here by "the Fourth Lateran Council's concern for orthodox teaching as well as Francis's own eagerness to promote the embrace of a life of penance" (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:78<sup>a</sup>).

*Exhortations to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF and 2LtF) are important to both branches of the Third Order because they are writings of the founder himself which he addressed to this Order particularly and together they symbolise the common heritage of both branches. Today the first part of the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1, 1-19) serves as the Prologue to the newly revised TOR Rule of 1982. This writing of Francis also serves as the Prologue to the SFO Rule approved in 1978 by Pope Paul VI and thus expresses the common origin of both Orders (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:34; Armstrong et al 1999/2001:41).

Hardick (1987:52) comments that by the first Chapter of the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1), Francis has formed a surprisingly intense and rich meaning of the term penance, a very important term in Franciscan spirituality which will therefore be addressed at this point before moving on to addressing the newly revised TOR Rule. This first Chapter (1LtF 1) is about the conversion of heart and the importance of receiving the Holy Eucharist so that the Holy Spirit may dwell in them and they in turn will dwell in Christ and through him in God the Father.

In both Letters, or Exhortations, Francis describes what a life in penance means, mainly: to love God and neighbour (1LtF 1, 1; 2LtF 18-19, 26) as it is written in the Gospels, to “abstain from vices and sins” (2LtF 32; 1LtF 1, 2), to “receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1LtF 1, 3; 2LtF 22-24; also in 1LtCus 6), to “confess all our sins to a priest” (2LtF 22; also in ER XXI, 6) and “to produce worthy fruits of penance” (1LtF 1, 4; 2LtF 25; also in ER XXI, 3).<sup>41, 42</sup>

In more detail Francis advised the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance* to praise God and pray – especially the “Our Father” (2LtF 21) – to judge with mercy, to be charitable, humble, giving alms, to fast, to visit churches frequently and revere the priests (:28-35), to consider oneself to be the servant of others and to relate to a brother who is at fault “with patience and humility” (:42-44).<sup>43</sup> Here another important element of Franciscan spirituality comes in, namely humility. It is obvious that these fruits of penance mainly flow from the commandment of Christ to love God and neighbour.

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<sup>41</sup> Mk 12:30; Mt 22:37-39.

<sup>42</sup> Mt 3:2; Lk 3:8.

<sup>43</sup> Mt 6:9-13.

For Francis this life of penance orientated on the Gospel is also based clearly on the *kenotic* Christ – his Incarnation and Passion (2LtF 4-12) – whose footprints the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance* are to follow (:13).<sup>44</sup>

Francis was serious about this life of penance and expressed deep concern about “those who do not do penance” (1LtF 2, 1-22; 2LtF 63-87). In his *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1), which serves as Prologue for both the SFO Rule and the revised TOR Rule, Francis explains to the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance* that those who persevere in a life of penance would live in union with the Triune God in this world already as witnesses to Christ. He described this union by saying:

*[T]he Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them and make Its home and dwelling place among them, and they are children of the heavenly Father Whose works they do, and they are spouses, brothers, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ. We are brothers to Him when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven. We are mothers when we carry Him in our hearts and body through a divine love and a pure and sincere conscience and give birth to Him through a holy activity which must shine as an example before others (1LtF 1, 6-10; also in 2LtF 48-53).*<sup>45</sup>

Francis ends the first Chapter of his *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1, 14-19), which serves now as the Prologue of the SFO Rule and the TOR Rule, with the precious Words of Christ himself, the Prayer of Christ for us to the Father from the Gospel according to John (Jn 17). It is the Prayer for Unity and for being one with Christ in the Father.

### **2.2.2 In a life of poverty and humility**

Poverty is another characteristic element of medieval Christian spirituality and particularly of Franciscan spirituality. Poverty was emphasised in the life of the itinerant preachers, the Gospel movements (which were also called religious poverty movements or *pauperes Christi*), the Regular Canons and the Cistercians.

In Franciscan spirituality poverty and humility belong together and in the *Salutation of the Virtues* (SalV 2) Francis called them sisters: “Lady holy Poverty, may the Lord protect You, with your Sister, holy Humility!” In Franciscan spirituality poverty and humility cannot be separated. They are correlative states where one cannot think of the one without the other. According to the *Earlier Rule* it is “the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ” (ER

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<sup>44</sup> This was already described in more detail in 2.1.

<sup>45</sup> Is 11:2; Jn 14:23; Mt 5:45, 12:50; 1 Cor 6:20; Mt 5:16.

IX, 1) that the brothers should follow. Also in the *Later Rule* Francis advised the brothers “[to] observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (LR XII, 4) and so it becomes obvious that poverty and humility only have their meaning through the *kenotic* Christ in the Gospel. Francis said of this Christ: “Though He was rich, He wished, together with the most Blessed Virgin, His mother, to choose poverty in the world beyond all else” (2LtF 5).<sup>46</sup> Therefore Francis included the Blessed Virgin Mary as an example for the Gospel life in poverty (also in ER IX, 5 and FLCI VI, 7).

For Francis this Gospel life in poverty included the renunciation of all the goods (1C 14-15) and in the very beginning of his *Earlier* and *Later Rule* he described the Gospel life of the brothers (besides living in obedience and chastity) as a life “without anything of one’s own” (LR I, 1; ER I, 1). In the same way Clare started her Rule, the *Form of Life* (FLCI I, 2). Living without personal property was also common in the monasteries.

However, Francis and Clare both emphasised that also their communities would not own anything in common (LR VI, 1; FLCI VIII, 1). This was very unusual at that time. The monasteries, following the example of the early Church, had property in common and many of them had become very rich in the process. Clare asked the Pope for the *Privilege of Poverty* (PrPov), which was definitely granted to her and her community by Pope Gregory IX and might have been granted to her already by Pope Innocent III.<sup>47</sup> This document sounds paradoxical because it gave her community permission not to have any property in common. This was something unheard of at that time.<sup>48</sup> In case of the Friars, having property would tie them down and prevent them from being free to go and preach across the world in the footsteps of Christ.

Possessions and privileges were also regarded as issues that would separate the brothers and sisters from their identity with the poor (Suess 1995:290). The brothers and sisters did not want to go along with the move of the society towards a “profit economy that favoured the enrichment of a few at the expense of impoverishing many” (Micó 1997b:278). As a sign of poverty and humility Francis wanted the brothers joining the fraternity to serve and care for the lepers, as part of their formation (AC=Assisi Compilation 9). Also by showing mercy to the poor and marginalised, even living among them, they would follow the

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<sup>46</sup> 2 Cor 8:9.

<sup>47</sup> Pope Gregory IX approved this document on 17 September 1228.

<sup>48</sup> The monasteries used to live from their lands, off the income of their properties and from their benefices. It was totally unheard of that monasteries would refuse ownership because such possessions would sustain their way of life. In the matter of poverty Francis and Clare’s approach was indeed radical.

footprints of Christ in poverty and humility. Therefore it is written in the *Earlier Rule* (ER IX, 2):

They must rejoice when they live among people considered of little value and looked down upon, among the poor and the powerless, the sick and the lepers, and the beggars by the wayside.

Another aspect is that the brothers lived from the work of their hands (ER VII; LR V; Test 20-21). Besides wanting the sisters to work for “the common good” (FLCI VII 1-2), Clare herself, even when paralysed and bedridden, made altar and linen clothes as an example of using work as a way of avoiding idleness (LCI 28; BC 16). To prevent the brothers from cooperating with the profit economy, they were not allowed to receive money, only the necessities for their “bodily support” (LR V, 3), like “*food and clothing*” (ER IX, 1).<sup>49</sup>

The Friars Minor are a mendicant Order, a begging Order. Hearing this, one could have the impression that the brothers walked around, praising the Lord, not working, but only begging for their needs. This was contrary to what Francis recorded in his *Testament* (Test 22): “And when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door”, or in the *Earlier Rule* (ER IX, 3): “When it is necessary, they may go for alms.” So he put the law of work first. However, as time went on, the brothers got more and more involved in pastoral work and did less manual work, a situation that made them more reliant on begging for necessities to support themselves (Micó 1997b:281). To intensify this sense of poverty and humility in the service of the Lord, not owning anything and begging alms as well, Francis called them to be “pilgrims and strangers in this world” (LR VI, 2; FLCI VIII, 1-2).

For Francis “Poverty is much more than a material concern” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:133<sup>a</sup>). He widened its meaning to include poverty and humility in relationships with others. In *The Admonitions* (Adm), for example, Francis emphasised: “That servant of God who does not become angry or disturbed at anyone lives correctly without anything of his own” (Adm XI, 3). Here the true fraternal love comes in and is revealed in an even deeper way in *Admonition XIV* (Adm XIV) about not concentrating on self, but to be humble, ready to forgive and full of love to others.<sup>50</sup>

True poverty and humility according to Francis, are also found in *Admonition XII* (Adm XII) where Francis explained that the brothers do not have to boast about the good things God does through them and they do not have to praise themselves. Instead they should

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<sup>49</sup> 1 Tim 6:8.

<sup>50</sup> The text of Adm XIV is found under 2.1 in this research paper.



regard themselves as “less than all others” (Adm XII, 3). This does not have to do with a negative self-image, but with the awareness that it is God who works through a person to do good. It is Francis and Clare’s response to the *kenotic* love of Christ. St Paul says:

Remember how generous the Lord Jesus was: he was rich, but he became poor for your sake, to make you rich out of his poverty (2 Cor 8:9).

Francis and Clare’s “wholehearted response to Christ led them to show their love for him by living in a way which gave expression to the poverty and humility of Christ and their willingness to participate in his kenotic love” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:20). Similarly, Clare writes to Agnes of Prague: “As a poor virgin, embrace the poor Christ” (2LAg 18).

In her *Blessing*, Clare encourages the sisters by saying: “Always be lovers of your souls and those of all your sisters” (BICl 14). This shows that her humility and spiritual poverty are not about a negative self-image, but rather about the loving of one’s own soul as God’s own dwelling place, and of the souls of all the other sisters. A statement of Sister Filippa at the canonisation process recalls the same positive attitude of Clare. In *The Acts of the Process of Canonization of Clare of Assisi*, Sister Filippa testifies that Clare said at the end of her life: “O Lord, may You Who have created me, be blessed” (PC<sup>2</sup>, Third Witness 20).

### **2.2.3 In a community characterised by minority**

The Franciscan brothers lived their Gospel life in a fraternity, a brotherhood. In the same way that Jesus sent his disciples on their mission together and not alone (Lk 10:1-9), so the profile of the Order of the Friars Minor is a Gospel brotherhood (Inter-Franciscan Commission 1999:242). All the brothers are equal. Compared to the monastic Orders and the Regular Canons and Friars Preachers, who also lived in community, the Friars Minor had no abbots or priors (ER VI, 3), but Francis called the ones entrusted with the care of the brothers “ministers and servants” (Micó 1995b:131-132; ER IV, 6; LR X, 6) following the example of the Lord who came to serve and not to be served (ER IV, 6; Adm IV, 1).<sup>51, 52</sup> Micó writes in his article on obedience:

The minister is placed at the center of the Fraternity, not so much as a leader who shapes and influences the brothers according to his own ideas, but as a servant who reminds them of what they have promised the Lord, help them to achieve it and strengthens them when they are weak. The only authority the ministers and guardians have is that of enabling the other friars to obey the Gospel (Micó 1995c:239).

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<sup>51</sup> Mt 23:8; Lk 22:26.

<sup>52</sup> Mt 20:28. However, Clare did use the term abess in her Rule (FLCl) due to the canonical laws of the time.

The ministers are not supposed to dominate the brothers. In his *Rule for Hermitages* (RH), Francis gave some brothers the role of “mothers”, indicating that he valued the role of women as the primary nurturers of life which would include caring for the other brothers as “sons”. As the brothers had to exchange their respective roles, Francis’s Rule (RH) applied to the hermitage ensured that each in turn experienced what it was to nurture others as a mother.

The elements of poverty and humility discussed above, blend together with minority. There is also a bond between poverty and fraternity, because living in fraternity means being related to and depending on each other (Armstrong 1995:17, 77). Francis called his fraternity the “Order of Lesser Brothers” (1C 38; LR I, 1; ER VI, 3) or “Friars Minor”, the name that is central to the spirit of minority, poverty and humility. In a sense, Francis added the practice of service when he declared in the *Earlier Rule*: “Let one wash the feet of the other” (ER VI, 4; Adm IV, 2-3).<sup>53</sup> Consequently, living a Gospel life in the fraternity radiates love, joy and peace and is open to others.

#### **2.2.4 On a world-wide mission**

The Regular Canons did not live withdrawn in monasteries, but as priests and deacons associated with the local churches they combined pastoral ministry in the parishes with the monastic way of life. The Friars Preachers and the Friars Minor went beyond that by moving around as itinerants preaching the Gospel and opening up to the world. This needs to be viewed in the context of that time which was characterised by a great mobility of the people, the epoch of pilgrimages and crusades, of the hermit-preachers and Gospel movements.

As an itinerant preacher of penance, forgiveness and peace Francis was well aware that the brothers would preach “more by their example than by their words” (Micó 1996a:10; L3C 36). Francis also understood that the Gospel message excluded no one because Christ himself had said to the apostles: “Go, [...], make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28:19; Micó 1996b:111). In 1219, during the violent time of the crusades against the Saracens, Francis set out on a peace mission to meet Sultan Malik al-Kamil (1180-1238), and was ready to die as a martyr if need be (1C 57).<sup>54</sup> He saw martyrdom, “the embrace of death after the example of

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<sup>53</sup> Jn 13:14.

<sup>54</sup> “In 1219 the Fifth Crusade succeeded in capturing the town of Damietta” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:231<sup>c</sup>); Francis visited the Sultan at his new camp, al-Marssura, south of Damietta. Celano writes: “Before he reached the Sultan, he was captured by soldiers, insulted and beaten, but was not afraid. He did not flinch at threats of torture nor was he shaken by death threats. Although he was ill-treated by many with a hostile spirit and a harsh attitude he was received very graciously by the Sultan. The Sultan honored him as much as he could, offering him many gifts, trying to turn his mind to worldly riches. But when he saw that he resolutely scorned all these things like dung, the Sultan was overflowing with admiration and recognized him as a man unlike any other. He was moved by his words *and listened to him very willingly*” (1C 57).

Jesus” (Armstrong 1995:86), as the climax of his missionary vocation. However, Francis neither died a martyr nor did he convert the Sultan, but he did have a peaceful dialogue with him. Celano describes the event as a spiritual and friendly meeting between the two (1C 57; Suess 1995:286-287). In the same way Francis advised those brothers who would “go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers” (ER XVI, 3) that they should be simply present among them, “not to engage in arguments or disputes but to be subject *to every human creature for God’s sake* and to acknowledge that they are Christians” (ER XVI, 6).<sup>55</sup> Here again the aspects of humility and minority become obvious. The brothers should only “announce the Word of God, when they see it pleases the Lord” (ER XVI, 7). This attitude towards mission is still relevant today.

### 2.2.5 Life in and for the Church

Similar to Norbert of Xanten and the hermit- or wandering preachers of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Francis was concerned to live the Gospel life “in perfect fidelity to the Church” (Lapsanski 1976:28). Therefore he asked Pope Innocent III, after a few brothers had joined him, to confirm their Gospel way of life (the primitive rule or *Protorule*; Test 15).<sup>56</sup> In his *Earlier Rule* Francis promised “obedience and reverence to the Lord Pope Innocent and his successors” (ER Prologue 3) and extended this obedience to the persons who would lead the brothers after him. In the *Later Rule* he commanded his fraternity to live in strict fidelity to the Church:

I command the ministers through obedience to petition from our Lord the Pope for one of the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, who would be the governor, protector and corrector of this fraternity, so that, being always submissive and subject at the feet of the same Holy Church and steadfast in the Catholic Faith, we may observe poverty, humility, and the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ as we have firmly promised (LR XII, 3-4).

For Francis the Gospel life is only possible in a close connection with the faith and life of the Church of Rome (Hardick & Grau 1982:216), despite all her weaknesses. He supported the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) by implementing its canons in the *Later Rule* and by encouraging the *Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (2LtF 22) to confess their sins to a priest, to receive the Sacrament of the Eucharist and to “be Catholics” (:32). In doing this he also took a stand against the heretical influences of the time. Micó (1994a:30) touches on this when he writes about Francis’s life in the Holy Mother Church:

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<sup>55</sup> 1 Pt 2:13.

<sup>56</sup> Also in: 1C 32; 2C 16; LMj III 8-10; L3C 46-49.

In her, he had received the faith; in her, he had been given the grace of conversion; in her, it had been made plain to him that he should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel; to her he had recourse for assurance that his plan was not a mere personal caprice.

Francis and Clare loved Christ and the Gospel and they loved the Church as well because they experienced the presence of Christ in her. Consequently Franciscan Gospel life is only possible in the Church and not apart from or outside the Church.

### **2.2.6 Life with a contemplative dimension**

Francis and Clare were people of contemplation; their life had a contemplative dimension. They surrendered themselves totally to the God they had experienced and were concerned to keep themselves open to his presence (Micó 1995a:17). Therefore it is not possible to limit their contemplation to certain spiritual exercises as it concerned their whole life (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:112). In his writings, Francis insisted on continuous prayer and openness to God at all times, as we read in the *Earlier Rule*:

Therefore, let nothing hinder us, nothing separate us, nothing come between us. Wherever we are, in every place, at every hour, at every time of the day, every day and continually, let all of us truly and humbly believe, hold in our heart and love, honor, adore, serve, praise and bless, glorify and exalt, magnify and give thanks to the Most High and Supreme Eternal God Trinity and Unity, *Father, Son and Holy Spirit* (ER XXIII 10, 11).

Francis wanted the brothers to be alert to this unity of life and contemplation and keep their hearts open in love and praise to the Triune God. In this way the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would dwell in them and transform them (Micó 1995a:18). At the end of the *Letter to the Entire Order* (LtOrd 50-52) Francis prayed for his community so that they, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, would be able to follow the footsteps of Christ and so make their journey towards the Trinitarian God.<sup>57</sup> In Franciscan spirituality the journey towards the Triune God is always marked by the contemplation and love of the *kenotic* Christ, especially his Incarnation and Passion, and by sharing in his poverty and humility and in his joy and pain in total surrender. This is the special feature of Franciscan Christo-centrism and Christ-centred mysticism (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:111-112; Sheldrake 1991/1995:204).<sup>58</sup> Francis

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<sup>57</sup> The text of this prayer is to be found in 2.1 of this research paper.

<sup>58</sup> The roots of the term mysticism are Greek. It comes from *myo*, which means “to close”, mostly the eyes and the mouth and to keep silent about the divine cults in front of others (Steggink 1988:904). The classical definition of Jean Gerson says that mysticism “is knowledge of God by experience, arrived at through the embrace of unifying love” (Corbishley 1967/1981:175). The love of God is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rm 5:5) and “mystical life begins with a deep experience of this infusion of divine love” (Johnston 2000:3).

surrendered himself radically to the love of God he had experienced in the *kenotic* Christ and thus became a “seraph of love” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:12). Clare responded to God’s love by sharing in Christ’s poverty and humility and loving him in her contemplative way of life. She experienced transformation by frequently looking into the mirror of Christ and contemplating his Incarnation and Passion.

Kourie describes mysticism “as the experience of union with God” (1998:439), an experience of the love of God which calls for the love of neighbour and for a transformation in Christ. Therefore, she says: “[T]he interface of mystical experience and a mystical way of life is [...] of utmost importance” (Kourie 1998:448; 1992:87). In Francis and Clare this transformation becomes a visible reality.

Francis experienced an infusion of God’s love that was exceptional when he received the Stigmata at La Verna two years before he died (1C 94-96). This mystical experience of the Divine was a sheer gift of God to him and made him known as the “mystic of La Verna” (Wrobelwski & Karecki 2000:12).

Francis’s and Clare’s devotion to the humanity of Christ and their Christ-centred mysticism gave way to a major movement in Western spirituality towards the emphasis on the imitation of Christ (Cousins in Sheldrake 1991/1995:204).

### **2.3 The development of the Franciscan charism in the three Orders**

Soon after Francis of Assisi began his Gospel way of life in the footsteps of Christ, others were inspired to follow him. In his *Earlier Rule* Francis speaks about those who wish to join the brotherhood as being called “by divine inspiration” (ER II, 1). Francis knew that it was the Lord who gave him brothers and that “the Most High Himself revealed to [him... to] live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel” (Test 14). It was by the grace of God that the Franciscan movement came into being. The followers of Francis share his charism and Gospel life.

McBrien explains how the charism of one person can be shared by others:

Charisms given to one person can become embodied in a large group, such as a religious institute. The unique gift of the founder or foundress is given to every member from one generation to the next. Through these unmerited gifts, the Spirit continues to call the Church to dynamic growth and to renewed fidelity to Christ (1995:300).

Harrington says that a charism “is a supernatural gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit for building up the body of Christ” (1987:180). Francis and his followers are called to rebuild the Church by following Christ in a radical Gospel way.

The Franciscan movement soon developed into three Orders that share the same charism, but expressed in various ways. The Franciscan family, or the three Orders, also interpreted and lived the charism against the historical, social and ecclesiastical background of the time, with its fidelities and lapses. Wroblewski & Karecki note this about the development of the Franciscan charism:

The charism of Francis and Clare gradually moved from itinerancy to stability, from intuition to institution, from movement to canonical Order (2002:1).

### **2.3.1 The Order of Friars Minor – The First Order of St Francis**

The Order of Friars Minor founded by Francis of Assisi in 1209 is also called the First Order of St Francis. “The Franciscan movement had at first been an intuition that sprang from the heart and person of Francis” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2002:2), by the grace of God. Esser points out that the pilgrimage lifestyle of the Friars Minor, the itinerant preaching, was the special characteristic of the new Order:

If there was any feature of the new Order which was particularly striking, it was the fact that it had no cloisters in the old sense of the word. Rather did the friars go through the world calling people everywhere to repentance and proclaiming the kingdom of God (1970:54).

At that time canon law had not recognised that sort of religious life. However, formal recognition of a new way of religious life came in 1209 when Innocent III gave Francis and his followers his verbal approval to their request to live this life of itinerant preaching, to live according to the Gospel (Test 15; this refers to the primitive Rule of 1209).

Within about ten years the Friars Minor grew from twelve members in 1209 to five thousand members (AC 18; Moorman 1968/1988:54-55). This rapid growth led to the need of more structures in the Order and to the tendency of settling down to a more stable existence. In the course of time a growing number of clerics joined the fraternity who also “favoured the trend to live in fixed dwellings since they were intent on study and the priestly ministry” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2002:7).

Two parties of friars developed within the Order soon after Francis’s death, in the second half of the thirteenth century, the Spirituals and the Conventuals. The Spirituals favoured the strict observance of the rule and the austere life of Francis and the first friars.<sup>59</sup> The Conventuals “believed in progress and development” (Moorman 1968/1988:191) as the Order had changed since the time of its foundation and adapted to the needs of the Church.

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<sup>59</sup> The *Later Rule* (LR), *Regula bullata*, which was approved in 1223 by a papal bull of Honorius III.

Since the time of Francis the papacy had favoured the Order so “that it might play its full part in supplementing the pastoral work of the secular clergy, promoting the teaching of theology in the universities, supplying missionaries for work among the infidels, and combating heresy and ignorance at home” (Moorman 1968/1988:191). In order to fulfil this approach effectively the Conventuals started to live a more secure and monastic life. Therefore the Order experienced internal discord around the ideal of poverty. Pope John XXII supported the Conventuals for being loyal and in 1317 judged certain Spirituals (:311, 369) to be in defiance of the authority of the Church, calling some of them “rebels” in the matter of obedience and the practice of poverty, the critical issue being absolute poverty which meant living a life in simplicity and austerity and not depending on material goods or comforts.

This was not the end of struggles in the Order. For example, the Conventuals founded big convents in the towns which upset some friars who regarded this as compromising the ideal of the Franciscan way of life and caused the reform and rise of the Observants around the year 1368 (Moorman 1968/1988:372). Pope Leo X wanted to put an end to the disputes between the Conventuals and Observants and issued his bull “*Ite vos*” of 1517 to achieve union among them. He allowed the Observants to elect the Minister General (up to that time he had been elected by the Conventuals) and hoped for the reform of the Conventuals so that they, too, might be drawn into the union. However, this “bull of *unionis*” turned out to be a “bull of *separationis*” because the Conventuals did not respond to the call for reform. A tragic consequence of the bull was that it led to the Order splitting into two branches: the Observants, today called Franciscans (OFM), and the Conventuals (OFMConv) (:441, 584, 585).

The continual struggle over the interpretation of the Franciscan ideal soon resurfaced when the Capuchin reform started among the Observants in 1525. The Capuchins (OFMCap) felt that the Franciscan ideal had been compromised and accordingly strove to live more simply, serve the poor, practise a contemplative prayer life and preach the Word of God in the way Francis did. They were recognised by the Church in 1528 and became an independent branch of the First Order of St Francis in 1619 (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:195-199, 210).

The three branches of the First Order of St Francis, the Franciscans (OFM), the Conventuals (OFMConv) and the Capuchins (OFMCap) live according to the *Later Rule* (LR), the *Regula bullata*, which was approved by Pope Honorius III in 1223.

In 2009 the three branches together, in fact the whole Franciscan family, celebrated the 800<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the foundation of the Order in 1209. For that occasion some 2000 friars

travelled to Assisi, representing some 35000 friars throughout the world. Together they took part in the “Chapter of Mats” to recall and honour their origins and the original “Chapter of Mats” which took place between 1218 and 1222, when Francis called the brothers to a meeting in Assisi.<sup>60</sup> According to the sources there were some 5000 brothers at that time (AC 18; Moorman 1968/1988:54-55). The focus of 2009 Chapter was on gratitude for the Franciscan charism, the charism of Francis and Clare, and was accordingly a celebration that focused on prayer, thanksgiving and praise. As part of the celebration, the friars also travelled to Rome to visit Pope Benedict XVI, recalling the event in 1209 when Francis and his first followers gained the verbal approval of their Gospel life from Pope Innocent III. Pope Benedict XVI concluded his sermon to the friars with a call for conversion to empower them to rebuild the Church: “Like Francis, always start with yourselves. We are the first house that God wants to restore. If you are always able to renew yourselves in the spirit of the Gospel, you will continue to assist the pastors of the Church to make more and more beautiful the Church’s face, that of the bride of Christ” (Pope Benedict XVI 2009:15).

Two of the branches of the First Order of St Francis, the Friars Minor (OFM) and the Capuchins (OFM<sup>Cap</sup>), are found in South Africa although no fraternity of Conventuals (OFM<sup>Conv</sup>) has been established. The Capuchins (OFM<sup>Cap</sup>) have a very strong presence in the Cape while the Friars Minor (OFM) can be found in Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal and the Eastern Cape. These members of the First Order of St Francis, “witnessing to fraternity as an essential element of Christianity” (Prior 2009), continue the mission of building up the Church “through their parish ministry, education, retreats and the like. They are also very involved in addressing the social challenges of our time providing care for HIV-AIDS patients, promoting inter-faith dialogue, offering skill-training and much more” (Prior 2009).

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<sup>60</sup> In the 13<sup>th</sup> century at the “Chapter of Mats” the friars slept on straw mats, hence the name “Chapter of Mats”.



### 2.3.2 The Order of Poor Ladies / The Order of St Clare – The Second Order of St Francis

The Order of Poor Ladies, later known as the Order of St Clare (OSC), was founded in 1212 by Clare of Assisi who was inspired by the Gospel way of life of Francis of Assisi. It is also called the Second Order of St Francis. Clare and the Poor Ladies of San Damiano, as the first community was called, followed Christ and loved him in a life of strict poverty, prayer and enclosure. Other communities followed that wanted to live in the same spirit. This Order also experienced a struggle with Church authorities concerning the life of strict poverty, for instance about the life without property in common.

At first, Francis had given the sisters a *Form of Life (forma vitae)* which affirms that they share the same charism with the brothers. They, too, had been called “by divine inspiration” (FLCI VI, 3-4) to live the radical Gospel way of life. Francis promises his loving concern for the sisters:

Because by divine inspiration you have made yourselves daughters and handmaids of the most High, most Exalted King, the heavenly Father, and have taken the Holy Spirit as your spouse, choosing to live according to the perfection of the holy Gospel, I resolve and promise for myself and for my brothers always to have the same loving care and special solicitude for you as for them (FLCI VI, 3-4).<sup>61</sup>

By 1219 Cardinal Hugolino had given the sisters a *Form of Life* (FLHug=The Form and Manner of Life of Cardinal Hugolino) which he based on the Benedictine Rule and which would have allowed the sisters to have property in common so as to support themselves. His document also imposed a strict enclosure on them. This was the common way of life of religious women in the Middle Ages, but this practice would prevent them from living by the providence of God, which would have been the Franciscan way of life. The strict enclosure must have put an end to all the hopes the sisters might have had of being permitted to care for the poor (Armstrong 2006:17, 18).

Clare, concerned about the integrity of the Franciscan way of life, gained the *Privilege of Poverty* (PrPov) from Pope Gregory IX in 1228 which states that the community does not have to hold any property in common. However, Pope Gregory IX tried to restrict this privilege only to the community at San Damiano and later on he also tried to persuade Clare to take on possessions (Moorman 1968/1988:205).

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<sup>61</sup> Clare incorporated Francis’s *Form of Life (forma vitae)* for the sisters into her rule, her *Form of Life* (FLCI VI, 3-4). The brothers were to care for the sisters spiritually and materially, by begging for their needs.

As a number of monasteries of the Poor Ladies were not satisfied with the profession of the Benedictine Rule, Pope Innocent IV gave the sisters another *Form of Life* (FLInn=The Form of Life provided by Pope Innocent IV) in 1247 which omitted the reference to the Benedictine Rule but still would have allowed the community to hold property in common.

Clare was not satisfied with this rule and kept on insisting on the *Privilege of Poverty*. Finally she drew up her own rule, *The Form of Life of Clare of Assisi* (FLCl), an adaptation of the *Later Rule* (LR) of Francis of Assisi. It was the first rule drawn up by a woman and it was approved by Pope Innocent IV in 1253 (Moorman 1968/1988:211-212; Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:445). He approved Clare's *Form of Life* (FLCl) two days before she died, on 9 August 1253.

However, Pope Urban IV changed Clare's rule (FLCl) again in 1263 and gave the different monasteries the common title, the Order of St Clare. The rule of Pope Urban IV allowed common property (Moorman 1968/1988:213; Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:447). From that time onward the Order divided into two groups, the Clarisses who observed Clare's rule (FLCl) and the "Urbanist" Clarisses, who observed the rule of Urban IV (:447).

With the relaxation of the rule the monasteries soon increased their property, making reform necessary. St Colette of Corbie (1381-1447) reformed and founded different convents on Clare's rule (FLCl), now called Colettine Poor Clares (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:453-455).

Maria Lorenza Longo started the Order of the Capuchin Poor Clares (OSCCap) in 1535 and lived with her sisters in the "strictest observance of the Rule of St. Clare" (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:459).

Today there are approximately 15 000 Poor Clares living in some 1000 monasteries throughout the world. This number of sisters of the Order of St Clare includes some 10800 Poor Clares (OSC), some 1200 Urbanist Clarisses (OSCUrb), some 700 Colettines (OSCCol) and some 2300 Capuchinesses (OSCCap).<sup>62</sup>

In South Africa there are three religious communities that live in the spirit of St Clare: The Poor Clare (OSC) community outside Kokstad in Kwa Zulu Natal and the Poor Clare Capuchinesses (OSCCap) at Umzumbe on the Kwa Zulu Natal South Coast and at Swellendam in the Western Cape. These followers of Clare of Assisi lead an enclosed life of "regular community prayer, silent contemplation and joyful community living" (Prior 2009). Adoration of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist is at the heart of their contemplative life. It is also a life of petition for the Church and society of South Africa and for the whole human family.

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<sup>62</sup> Poor Clare statistics (15 September 2008): [www.orden-online.de/wissen/k/klarissen](http://www.orden-online.de/wissen/k/klarissen).

### 2.3.3 The Order of Penitents – The Third Order of St Francis

The origins of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, or the Order of Penitents, can be traced back to the year 1209, after Francis returned from Rome and preached to the people, touching them with his charism and inspiring them to live the Gospel way of life in his spirit and simplicity, while remaining in their own homes (1C 37; Moorman 1968/1988:40; Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:483). These were his followers who were not able to join religious life, a vowed life in the First or Second Order, because of marriage or other responsibilities. Celano writes:

Many people, well-born and lowly, cleric and lay, driven by divine inspiration, began to come to Saint Francis, for they desired to serve under his constant training and leadership. All of these the holy one of God, like a fertile stream of heavenly grace, watered with showers of gifts and he adorned the field of their hearts with the flowers of perfection. He is without question an *outstanding craftsman*, for through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved (1C 37).<sup>63</sup>

According to Celano, the lay people following Francis, were also “driven by divine inspiration” (1C 37) to renew the Church. He continues: “Furthermore, to all he gave a norm of life and to those of every rank he sincerely pointed out the way of salvation” (1C 37).

Francis addressed two letters, or documents, to his wider community of followers. The first is the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (also known as 1LtF=The First Letter to the Faithful), dated between 1209 and 1215. In this deeply spiritual text, Francis “perceives the Spirit of the Lord as the dynamic principle of the life of his followers” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:42<sup>a</sup>; Hardick 1987:54). By loving God and neighbour and receiving the Eucharist, they give witness to Christ and live in unity with the triune God. The second document is the *Later Admonition and Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (also known as 2LtF=The Second Letter to the Faithful), dated around 1220. This document is longer than the first one and includes detailed principles of a dedicated Christian life such as “a frequent reception of the Lord’s Body, regular confession, systematic almsgiving, abstinence from food and drink, and a striving after simplicity, humility, and charity” (Moorman 1968/1988:42). Francis also emphasises the humility of Christ’s Incarnation and the *kenosis* of his Passion, whose footprints they are to follow (2LtF 13).<sup>64</sup>

In 1221, in order to organise the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the Church gave them an official Rule, the *Memoriale Propositi*, most likely composed by Cardinal Hugolino and based on the verbal approval of Pope Honorius III (Moorman 1968/1988:42; Iriarte de

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<sup>63</sup> “This may be an allusion either to the three ranks in the church (clergy, religious, laity) or to the three Franciscan Orders (Lesser Brothers, Poor Ladies, Lay Penitents)” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001: 216<sup>b</sup>).

<sup>64</sup> With regard to 2LtF see also 2.1 and 2.2.1 in this research.

Aspurz 1982:483; Carney et al 2008:40).<sup>65</sup> Because of the fact that the *Memoriale Propositi* was the first Rule issued to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, the year 1221 was once given as the official founding date of the Third Order of St Francis. This document has been criticised for lacking the biblical tone of Francis which is found in his *Exhortations*, 1LtF and 2LtF (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004a:6) and for lacking the spirit of Francis (Moorman 1968/1988:43; Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:484).<sup>66</sup> The *Memoriale Propositi*, which rather comprised juridical prescriptions, became and remained the official Rule for the Order of Penitents until 1289. However, not all groups within the Order of Penitents adopted this Rule (Moorman 1968/1988:216-217).

In 1289 Pope Nicholas IV approved a definite Rule, *Supra montem*, for “the brothers and sisters of the Order of Penance” (Carney et al 2008:73).<sup>67</sup> This Rule, too, was not touched by Francis’s biblical vision of his *Exhortations*, 1LtF and 2LtF (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:6), but was again of juridical nature and proposed to preserve unity and orthodoxy (Stewart in Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:6; Moorman 1968/1988:216-217). “Stewart expresses a contrary view of Francis’s *Exhortations* when he says: Francis’s *Exhortations* served not to control heresy, not to preserve orthodoxy, but rather, to bring others to the experience of God in and through Christ” (in Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:6).

In 1289 under the papacy of Nicholas IV, the bull *Supra Montem* canonically established the Third Order of St Francis, “but, historically, it is clearly documented that the existence of what would later be called the Third Order goes back to the times of Francis himself” (Carney et al 2008:39).

During this time of the approval of the Rule of 1289, the Order of Penitents had already gradually developed into two branches which became, as time went on, more and more distinct from one another:

The first branch of the Penitents was composed of those who followed the spiritual direction of Francis while they remained in the world. For the most part, they married and worked for their living in various occupations. The second branch was composed of those who had begun to live community life, more or less perfectly, and more or less totally. Immediately after the Rule of Nicholas IV the Order of Penitents began to call themselves, or were called, the Third Order of St Francis. A short time later, these two branches were openly called the Third Order Secular and the Third Order Regular respectively (Pazzelli 1993:1).

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<sup>65</sup> The text of the *Memoriale Propositi* is to be found in Carney et al 2008:63-71.

<sup>66</sup> 1LtF 14-19 is taken from the Unity Prayer of Christ from the Gospel of John 17. The text of 2LtF 4-5, 6-10 and 11-13, referring to the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, is found in 2.1 of this research.

<sup>67</sup> The text of the Rule *Supra Montem* of 1289 is to be found in Carney et al 2008:73-85.

With regard to the Third Order Secular, the Rule of 1289 was modified by Pope Leo XIII in 1884 and promulgated in the apostolic constitution *Misericors Dei Filius*. This was done to adapt the Rule to modern life and make it acceptable to the greatest number of lay penitents (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:504).

In 1978 Pope Paul VI promulgated the new Rule for today called Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) (:508). It must be noted that the Rule of 1978 restores the biblical tone of Francis (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004a:13).

### 3. The history of the Third Order Regular of St Francis and its Rule

From the lay penitents of the Franciscan Order, religious communities were already emerging, more especially towards the end of the thirteenth century, and taking on the structure of religious life (Hardick 1987:47; Moorman 1968/1988:219). Lay members gradually began living in community, professing vows and performing works of charity in various ways (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:34).

Independent communities that were already active, such as the *Beguines* and *Begards* adopted the Rule of Nicholas IV from 1289 of the Third Order of St Francis and became religious communities (Moorman 1968/1988:219-220).<sup>68</sup> Many communities felt called to care for the sick, the poor and needy and later on some women's communities took on an enclosed life (Moorman 1968/1988:220, 420). However, the Rule of 1289 was strictly speaking a Rule for lay people and the Third Order Regular needed a Rule suitable for the vowed life in community (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:10).

In 1521, the Third Order Regular received its own Rule approved by Pope Leo X, in *Inter cetera*.<sup>69</sup> The Rule retained those parts of the Rule of Nicholas IV which could be adapted to community life and now included religious vows (Iriarte de Aspurz 1982:514). In this way the Third Order Regular was canonically established.

Then, in 1927 this Rule experienced a renewal in conformity with the new code of Canon Law introduced by Pope Pius XI in *Rerum condicio* (Carney et al 2008:39).<sup>70</sup> This Rule referred to the example of Francis in the matters of religious life which was not yet the case in the Rule of 1521 (Hardick 1987:48). However, as far as Francis' presence in the Rule is concerned, it was based neither on his writings nor did it reflect his voice.

In reviewing the Rule of 1289 promulgated in *Supra montem* by Nicholas IV, himself a Franciscan, one has to wonder why he gave Francis credit for founding the Order of Penance, but he neither quoted Francis nor referred to his own writings (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:14). A relevant passage in his bull, *Supra montem*, reads:

Wherefore the glorious confessor of Christ, blessed Francis, the founder of this Order, showing by words as well as by example the way leading to God, instructed his children in the sincerity of the same faith, and wished them to confess it boldly, retain it firmly and fulfill it in deed, so that as they profitably advanced along its path, they might merit, after the imprisonment of the present life, to be made possessors of eternal beatitude (Rule *Supra Montem* in Carney et al 2008:73).

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<sup>68</sup> An explanation to *Beguine* life is to be found in Chapter 2 of this research. The *Begards* were a similar group of men, mostly weavers and cloth workers (Moorman 1968/1988:220).

<sup>69</sup> The text of the Rule *Inter cetera* of 1521 is to be found in Carney et al 2008:87-96.

<sup>70</sup> The text of the Rule *Rerum condicio* of 1927 is to be found in Carney et al 2008:97-109.

In these Rules the “law” had preference over the writings and the spirit of the founder. The idea of bringing to light the charism of the founder was an insight the Church gained only during Vatican II (Wroblewski & Karecki 2004b:14). The religious communities were to renew their life in “the spirit of the founder” (PC<sup>1</sup>=Perfectae Caritatis 2b).

After Vatican II, and considering the earlier work of German Franciscan scholars after World War II, the Franciscan researchers discovered the writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi as the essential basis for describing Franciscan spirituality. Therefore the Rule for the Third Order Regular of St Francis required revision, based on the writings of Francis of Assisi with complementary passages of the writings of Clare of Assisi (Hardick 1987:47-49). This newly revised TOR Rule was approved by Pope John Paul II in 1982.

In the Papal Approval, *Franciscanum Vitae Propositum*, “The Franciscan form of life”, “the Pontiff indicates the unique nature of this Rule which was inspired through the discernment of members of the Order and achieved by a massive collaborative effort involving the more than four hundred congregations that comprise it” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:5).<sup>71</sup> Pope John Paul II mentioned the process which led to “the desired convergence of different points of view through collegial discussion and consultation, proposals and studied amendments” (in Carney et al 2008:309). The process involved many meetings and numerous workshops comprising the different religious communities and regional groups. Here special mention must be made of the international congresses that were responsible for the development of the Rule in gradual stages (Hardick 1987:48-49):

a) Madrid, April 1974:<sup>72</sup>

In April 1974 the male communities of the Third Order Regular of St Francis held a congress at Madrid in Spain. They drafted a text using current language and created a document that was logically and theologically well founded and structured.

b) More or less at the same time there was news of a new text that had been drafted through the co-operative work of French and Belgium Franciscan Sisters (Hardick 1987:48), “by twenty-five congregations headquartered in France and Belgium” (Carney et al 2008:18).<sup>73</sup> This new text was taken from the *Earlier and Later Rule* (ER and LR) of Francis and the Rule of Clare (FLC1=*The Form of Life of Clare of Assisi*) (Hardick 1987:48).

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<sup>71</sup> The text of the *Franciscanum Vitae Propositum* together with the newly revised TOR Rule is available in Appendix 1.

<sup>72</sup> Madrid statement (1974), in Carney et al 2008:196-200.

<sup>73</sup> French document (1972), in Carney et al 2008:175-195.

c) Assisi, autumn 1976:

In autumn 1976 a congress was held at Assisi to determine the way to proceed in order to actively involve all communities of the Third Order Regular in the project aimed at revising the Rule (Hardick 1987:49). At this assembly the representatives of the male communities of the Third Order expressed concern that the French document was directed only to communities of sisters and that “the penitential foundations of the Order were not acknowledged” (Carney et al 2008:18).

d) Assisi, 3-8 October, 1979:

The most important decision of this congress at Assisi was the decision to proceed with the work on a draft of the Rule that was totally based on the words of Francis; this was the French document. There was also an agreement on structuring the work to ensure that all proposals were taken into consideration.

e) Rome, 1-10 March, 1982:

The final congress at Rome decided on the new text of the Rule. However, it would be for the Pope to approve the Rule to validate it for all communities of the Third Order Regular of St Francis.



#### **4. The newly revised TOR Rule and its relationship to the writings of Francis and Clare<sup>74</sup>**

The different formulations of the Third Order Rule over the years at various congresses finally converged in a Rule that was based on the writings of Francis and Clare and reflected the principal elements of their Gospel way of life and its authentic origin in Scripture itself. In essence an examination of the Rule confirms that it is a way of understanding the unchanging Word of God for our times. Pope John Paul II's validation of the Rule and Life for the contemporary world will be discussed in the following section.

##### **4.1 The Papal Approval *Franciscanum Vitae Propositum***

The documents of Vatican II affirm a tradition in which the first words of important Church documents immediately indicate the meaning of the text (Hardick 1987:45). Pope John Paul II followed this tradition when he confirmed the newly revised *Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis* with the letter *Franciscanum Vitae Propositum*, "The Franciscan form of life" (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:5). With those first words of the document of approval the Pope "indicates the unique nature of this Rule" (:5) which is about the Franciscan ideal of life from the very first to the very last sentence (Hardick 1987:45).

Pope John Paul II approved this Rule on 8 December 1982 which is the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary and also a Franciscan feast when the Franciscan Order as a whole, in all its branches, venerates Mary as its patroness. In his promulgation of approval the Pope said:

Much as in past centuries, the Franciscan proposal of life even in our times continually draws many men and women desirous of evangelical perfection and thirsting for the reign of God. Inspired by the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, the members of the Third Order Regular set forth to follow Jesus Christ by living in fraternal communion, professing the observance of the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity in public vows, and by giving themselves to innumerable expressions of apostolic activity. To actualise in the best way possible their chosen way of life, they dedicate themselves unreservedly to prayer, strive to grow in fraternal love, live true penance and cultivate Christian self-denial.

Since these very elements and motives for living the Franciscan proposal are clearly present in the "Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis" and since they are clearly in accord with the genuine Franciscan spirit, we, in the fullness of our apostolic authority, determine, declare and order that the present Rule have the force and importance to illustrate to the Brothers and Sisters this authentic meaning of the Franciscan life, while bearing in mind what our predecessors Leo X and Pius XI, with the Apostolic Constitutions *Inter cetera* and *Rerum conditio* presented on this matter in their own times.

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<sup>74</sup> The entire text of the newly revised TOR Rule is available in Appendix 1.

#### **4.2 The Prologue: *Words of St Francis to his followers* (1LtF 1, 1-19)**

The first part of the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1, 1-19) serves as the Prologue to this Third Order Regular Rule, at the same time reminding its members of the origins of the Order. In this Prologue it is Francis of Assisi himself, the founder, speaking to the members of the Order about true penance. The *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF) also serves as the Prologue to the Rule for the Secular Franciscan Order (SFO) which Pope Paul VI approved in 1978. The common Prologue of both branches of the Third Order expresses their common origin (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:34; Armstrong et al 1999/2001:41).

The words Francis uses in the Prologue demonstrate the richness of his understanding of penance. It is not so much the turning away from something, but rather the turning to God in love, including love of neighbour and love of receiving the Holy Eucharist (Hardick 1987:53). Francis perceives the Holy Spirit as the “dynamic principle of the life of his followers” (Armstrong et al 1999/2001:42<sup>a</sup>). He understands that the transforming power of the Holy Spirit empowers the followers to turn to God in an act that also draws them into an intimate union with the Divine. In the process the followers become children of the Father, spouses, brothers and sisters and mothers of Christ. Francis elaborates on this concept of relationship with God: The followers are the children of God when they do his works; they are spouses of Christ when the Holy Spirit unites their faithful souls with Jesus Christ; they are brothers and sisters of Christ when they do the Father’s will; they are mothers when they bear him in their hearts and bodies – when “we give birth to him through our holy actions which must shine in example to others”. Francis concludes his thoughts with Christ’s evocative unity prayer (Jn 17) which he uses to draw his followers into a loving union with the Triune God.

#### **4.3 In the Name of the Lord! Here begins the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis**

The Rule begins in the way Francis also started his *Later Rule* (LR) for the Friars Minor: “In the Name of the Lord!” In this way he also started his *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF) which serves as the Prologue of the Third Order Rule. According to Hardick this means that everything in the text of this Rule is based on our Lord Jesus Christ himself and is intended to lead us to Christ who brought us salvation (1987:59). “In the Name of the Lord” is therefore not simply a pious saying to introduce the Rule, but a life programme shown to us through Francis as a true image of Christ.

The beginning of the Rule continues in the same spirit: “Here begins the Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis”. It is important to see that “Rule and Life” belong together. The “Rule” needs to bear fruit in “Life” and to nourish the charism. The “Life” needs to have the “Rule” and its guidelines to enable the members to persevere. Francis had already used this term “Rule and Life” in the beginning of his *Later Rule* for the Friars Minor (LR I, 1).

Article 1 of the first Chapter of this Rule states the identity of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis and their “form of life” which is centred in “[observing] the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ” (TOR Rule 1.1) while living the religious vows. We find the same unifying ideal of Gospel living for the large Franciscan family in Francis’s Rule for the Friars Minor (LR I, 1) and in the *Form of Life of Saint Clare* (FLCI I, 2; Hardick 1987:61). It is about “[f]ollowing Jesus Christ” and this “[after] the example of Saint Francis” (TOR Rule 1.1). It means to follow the *kenotic* Christ – the Christ who emptied himself and gave himself for us. Therefore the Franciscan religious are called to give themselves to him totally, especially by living their religious vows. Consequently Article 1 concludes by saying: “They must deny themselves (Mt 16:24) as each has promised God” (TOR Rule 1.1; 2LtF 40). It refers to the Gospel of Matthew, when Jesus said: “If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Mt 16:24).

After the introductory explanation of what forms the very heart of the Order’s spirituality in Article 1, Article 2 introduces the prime value of penance, which is characteristic of Franciscan Gospel life. This article emphasises that this life of penance by “turning to God and being conformed to Christ” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:37) is an ongoing process that demands perseverance. The members of the Order are reminded that they are united with the Catholic Church in all its diversity of membership in being called “to persevere in true faith and penance” (TOR Rule 1.2). Here it is important to acknowledge the connection with Francis’ Earlier Rule where he also calls all Catholics “to persevere in true faith and penance” (ER XXIII, 7).

Thereafter the need for prayer, poverty and humility in this life of penance and conversion are emphasised. The text continues that the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular are “to abstain from all evil and persevere to the end in doing good” (TOR Rule 1.2; ER XXI, 9) which Francis stresses in the *Earlier Rule* for the Friars Minor. The text includes the three most important aspects of this Gospel life of penance taken from Francis’ *Earlier Rule*: To acknowledge God, to adore God and to serve God in penance (ER XXIII, 4;

TOR Rule 1.2). From this flows the promise of being invited by the Son of God at the end of time: “Come you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world” (Mt 25:34).

Articles 1 and 2 of the Third Order Rule concern the Franciscan religious life as characterised by penance. Article 3 reinforces fidelity to the Pope and the Catholic Church, an attitude Francis has already demanded of the Friars Minor in his *Later Rule* (LR I, 2) and in the *Prologue* of his *Earlier Rule* (ER Prologue 3). Clare shares this call in the *Form of Life* (FLCI I, 3) for the Poor Clares. “In this same spirit” the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular “are to obey those who have been placed in the service of the fraternity” (TOR Rule 1.3).<sup>75</sup> This, too, is to be found in Francis’ *Later Rule* (LR I, 3) and in the *Form of Life of St Clare* (FLCI I, 5).

Article 3 ends by saying that the Brothers and Sisters should respect one another and “show respect and honor to one another” (TOR Rule 1.3) wherever they meet. Francis had also asked this of his brothers in his *Earlier Rule* (ER VII, 15). Finally, the last sentence of Article 3 calls the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular to “foster unity and communion with all the members of the Franciscan family” (TOR Rule 1.3) in all its cultural and social diversity.

This call for unity and a readiness to embrace the Church and its teachings prepares the way for those wanting to follow the Franciscan way of life.

#### **4.4 Acceptance into this Life**

“This chapter considers formation and the ongoing process of *metanoia*” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:40), which is the constant turning to God. It is a life-long process which does not end with their initial formation and involves the elements and values of conversion, prayer, poverty and humility/minority which are integral to the Franciscan Gospel life and “constitute the fabric of the Rule text in each of its parts” (:40).

In Article 8, the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular are called to “make a home and dwelling place” for the Triune God “[w]ithin themselves” (TOR Rule 2.8). This is taken from Francis’ *Earlier Rule* (ER XXII, 27) which has parallels to his *Exhortations to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* (1LtF 1, 5-10; 2LtF 48-53). Article 8 takes up the theme of a reading of the Gospel of John and its call to intimacy when Christ himself promises union

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<sup>75</sup> The superiors in a Franciscan community are called “ministers and servants”.

with God to those who love him: “If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make our home with him” (Jn 14:23).

#### **4.5 Spirit of Prayer**

The emphasis of this Chapter is not so much on certain methods of prayer but rather on the inner and spiritual orientation towards God which finds its expression in prayer and receives nourishment through prayer (Hardick 1987:89). Here, too, the Trinitarian aspect of the Franciscan way of life and prayer appears in the context of Article 10 which states that Franciscan prayer is about praising God “[w]ith all creation” (TOR Rule 3.10). Then, in Article 11, as they orientate their lives completely on the Gospel, the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular are reminded to “reflect upon and keep in their hearts the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the word of the Father, as well as the words of the Holy Spirit which are spirit and life (Jn 6:63)” (TOR Rule 3.11). It again shows the centrality of Franciscan “life according to the form of the Holy Gospel” as it is written right in the beginning of this Rule (TOR Rule 1.1).

Article 12 concerns receiving the Eucharist “with great humility and veneration” so as to receive “eternal life” (TOR Rule 3.12; Jn 6:54). This is taken from the *Earlier Rule* of Francis (ER XX, 5) for the Friars Minor. They should show the greatest veneration for the Eucharist, and reverence for the name of the Lord and all his written words, because everything was reconciled with God through Christ (Col 1:20). Relevant parallels are to be found in the *Letter to the Entire Order* (LtOrd 12-13), in the earlier and later edition of the *Letter to the Clergy* (1LtCl 1; 2LtCl 1) and in Francis’ *Testament* (Test 12).

Finally, Article 13 is about doing penance, the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Adm XXIII, 3), and the need to “produce worthy fruits of penance” (2LtF 25). It is also about fasting (2LtF 32) and striving to be humble (Adm XIX; 2LtF 45). The reason for this is to be understood from the last sentence of Article 13: “They should desire nothing else but our Saviour, who offered Himself in His own Blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross for our sins, giving us an example so that we might follow in his footsteps” (TOR Rule 3.13; ER XXIII, 9). The Franciscan life according to the form of the Holy Gospel in the footsteps of Christ is beautifully illustrated in this Chapter of the Third Order Regular Rule about prayer.

#### **4.6 Life in Chastity for the Sake of the Reign of God**

The evangelical counsel of chastity is the first of the evangelical counsels to be looked at in this Rule. Therefore, the thoughts written down in Article 14 are basic for all three evangelical councils (Hardick 1987:108). Here the Gospel life is rooted in the wonder of being created in the likeness of God (Col 1:16). This is taken from the *Admonitions* (Adm V, 1) where Francis is in awe that God has given the human person so great a dignity. Article 14 continues about the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular: “Since they are created through Christ and in Christ, they have chosen this form of life which is founded on the words and example of our Redeemer” (4.14). So the evangelical counsel of chastity is situated “in the overall context of Gospel living” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:50) and together with the other evangelical counsels is founded on the life of our Redeemer himself.

Christ is the one who calls the Brothers and Sisters to a life of celibate chastity “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:12). These very words of Christ from the Gospel of Matthew are written down in Article 15 to demonstrate that celibate chastity empowers the Brothers and Sisters “to witness to God’s primacy” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:51) as “they are to care for the things of the Lord and they seek nothing else except to follow the will of God and to please God” (TOR Rule 4.15; 1 Co 7:32). This precept is also to be found in the *Earlier Rule* (ER XXII, 9) for the Friars Minor. The love of God revealed in the evangelical counsel of celibate chastity for the sake of the kingdom of heaven, leads to the love of neighbour (Hardick 1987:113). Article 15 ends by saying: “In all of their works charity toward God and all people should shine forth” (TOR Rule 4.15).

Article 16, with regard to the Letter to the Ephesians (Eph 5:23-26), reminds the Brothers and Sisters of their special call of grace “to manifest in their lives that wonderful mystery by which the Church is joined to Christ her divine spouse” (TOR Rule 4.16). Connected to this is a passage of the *Earlier Exhortation to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* “in which Francis compares the love of the disciple to the love of a spouse” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:51): “We are spouses when the faithful soul is joined by the Holy Spirit to our Lord Jesus Christ” (1LtF 1, 8).

At the end of the Chapter, in Article 17, the example of Mary, “the Spouse of the Holy Spirit and the Mother of the Church” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:52) is given to the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular. Pope John Paul II had wanted this Chapter to include a clear indication of the veneration of Mary, the Mother of God, to comply with the common practice in Church documents concerning the life of chastity for the sake of the

kingdom of heaven (Hardick 1987:115).<sup>76</sup> In this Article the *Salutation of the Blessed Virgin Mary* (=SalBVM) is mentioned, where Francis venerates Mary also as “the virgin made church” (SalBVM 1). The last sentence reminds the Brothers and Sisters that in chastity they are to follow the example of Mary as “the handmaid of the Lord” (Lk 1:38). The following Chapter concerns the Brothers and Sisters who are called to be humble servants of God.

#### **4.7 Way to Serve and Work**

This Chapter is characterised by Franciscan minority in the context of its meaning and relevance for society today as a way of spiritual life through humility and seeking to serve rather than to be served, of preferring to be with the lowly and marginalised rather than with the high and powerful.

Minority is fundamental to Franciscan spirituality from its beginnings, having now developed into a characteristic principle for the Order of Friars Minor. The term can be traced back to the socio-political background of the *minores* and *majores* (those being wealthy and powerful) of Assisi in Francis’s time. Following in the footsteps of the *kenotic* Christ, the humble Christ, Francis did not want the Friars to be part of the upper class. He neither wanted them to be part of the clerical class nor of the hierarchical monastic communities, but “to be servants of the Word” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:53). Christ, the incarnate Son of Man said about himself: “[T]he Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt 20:28).

The theme of service is sustained in Article 18 of the Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular which reads: “As poor people, the brothers and sisters to whom God has given the grace of serving or working should serve and work faithfully and devoutly” (TOR Rule 5.18). The emphasis on the manner of working is taken from the *Later Rule* (LR IV, 1-2) for the Friars Minor and is also to be found in the Rule of Clare (FLCI VII, 1-2). The Rule for the Third Order Regular adds another dimension to the understanding of work when it says that it is not only about the grace to work, but also the grace to serve. The term of “serving” in connection with working comes from the *Earlier Rule* (ER VII, 1) for the Friars Minor.

Francis understood work as a grace given by God. It arises from the account in the Book of Genesis (1:27-28) of the creation of humanity in God’s own image and the

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<sup>76</sup> The draft of the Rule that was submitted for approval did not contain a Chapter on chastity. Pope John Paul II asked that one Chapter of the Third Order Rule would address celibate chastity (Hardick 1987:115).

injunction to “be fertile...fill the earth and subdue it.” Because Francis saw work as a grace he could say in his *Testament* shortly before he died:

And I *worked with my hands*, and I still desire to work; and I earnestly desire all brothers to give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire to receive wages, but for example and to avoid idleness” (Test 20-21).

The Brothers and Sisters who would submit to idleness would be seen as not accepting God’s intention that they use their talents and abilities creatively to develop the world in accordance with the Divine plan. These Brothers or Sisters would be regarded as also not serving the other members of their religious community, becoming even a burden to them. Idleness and the reluctance to serve would be viewed as being unfaithful to God, to neighbour and to oneself (Hardick 1987:120-121). That is why Francis calls idleness the enemy of the soul (LR V, 1-2; FLCI VII, 1; TOR Rule 5.18). In today’s world having a work ethic would be a counter measure to idleness. Nonetheless “[w]hile avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they should not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion” (TOR 5.18 Rule; LR V, 1-2; FLCI VII, 1). The reality and the demands of modern life are such that there can be conflict between the needs of society and satisfying the ideals of religious life. There is a danger of Brothers and Sisters getting so absorbed in meeting the demands of work that they could run the risk of burn out and so be unable to focus on their prayer life as they would love to. Since charitable work often involves service at the coal face of society where there is hardship, suffering and adversity, Third Order members doing this work are in special danger of being affected. So they should remain vigilant to the admonition to have a care for “the spirit of holy prayer and devotion” (TOR Rule 5.18) to ensure a balance between service and prayer life.

Article 19 addresses the issue of work that is required to support the needs of the Brothers and Sisters (LR V, 3-4) at the same time knowing that “they are to give to the poor whatever they may have over and above their needs” (TOR Rule 5.19).

“And let them never want to be over others. Instead they must be servants and subjects to every human creature for God’s sake” (TOR Rule 5.19; 2LtF 47). The Brothers and Sisters should never seek to be “over” others to dominate or manipulate them. The reason for this is Jesus Christ himself. Paul writes in his Letter to the Philippians:

In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross (Phil 2:5-8).



The theme of service, of being a servant to others, was shown by Jesus himself in washing the feet of his disciples (Jn 13:5-10). Here was an action that not only went against the customs of the times, but continues to go against the stream today in a society that devalues the practice of humbling oneself in serving others. As Jesus explained to Peter such service is important for creating communities of service that share communion with each other in Christ.

Article 20 does not continue specifically with the theme of service and work, but covers new ground which concerns Christ's mission of peace and its implications for the Brothers and Sisters in their behaviour as servants and workers among themselves and towards others:

Let the brothers and sisters be mild, peaceful and unassuming, gentle and humble, speaking honestly to all in accord with their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever they go throughout the world they should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgmental towards others. Rather, it should be obvious that they are joyful, good-humoured, and happy in the Lord, as they ought to be. And in greeting others, let them say, the Lord give you peace (TOR Rule 5.20; ER VII, 16; LR III, 10-11; Test 23; Ph 4:4).

At the heart of the spirit of Franciscan service is the example set by Francis himself in urging his followers, in all they do, to be vessels of joyful ministry among themselves and among the people who share their company even though it may be difficult to do so. But we would do injustice to Francis to portray him as the ever jolly friar. His masterpiece *The Canticle of the Creatures* (CtC) reveals his connectedness to his Creator in all situations and a personality grounded in peace and joy, even to the extent of welcoming Sister Death.

#### **4.8 Life in Poverty**

There is no doubt that the theme of poverty is central to Franciscan spirituality. However, Francis points to Christ himself in order to explain the dimensions of poverty to the Brothers and Sisters. The cause for a religious to live in poverty must be seen in the *kenotic* Christ (2Co 8:9), who emptied himself for our sake (Ph 2:7). This Chapter on poverty starts with Francis's own words of his *Earlier Rule* (ER IX, 1): "Let all the brothers and sisters zealously follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ" (TOR Rule 6.21).

Francis, and therefore this Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular, includes also the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary who shines forth in her humility, her acceptance of the will of the Father and her fidelity towards her Son. She is the Mary whose *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46-55) is only possible for someone who lives in gratitude and

does not want to rule others or to possess things (Hardick 1987:134-135; 2LtF, 5). Francis wrote to Clare and her sisters:

I, little brother Francis, wish to follow the life and poverty of our most high Lord Jesus Christ and of His most holy Mother and *to persevere* in this *until the end*; and I ask you, my ladies, and I give you my advice that you live always in this most holy life and poverty (FLCI VI, 7).

The Brothers and Sisters should be content with clothing and food and be very careful about money (TOR Rule 6.21). Money and its potential to corrupt was as much a danger in the commerce of the 13<sup>th</sup> century as it is today. “[T]he destructive force of greed” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:59) remains a danger now as it was then.

The Rule includes a very important aspect of poverty, the solidarity with the poor and marginalised. It reads: “And let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street” (TOR Rule 6.21; ER IX, 2). The love of Christ calls to the love of neighbour. The various congregations of Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular have continually committed themselves to charitable work as a crucial aspect of the Franciscan way of life.

Article 22 addresses spiritual poverty in the sense that the Brothers and Sisters are to live “as pilgrims and strangers” (TOR Rule 6.22; 1P 2:11; LR VI, 2; FLCI VIII, 2) in this world and to “neither appropriate nor defend anything as their own” (TOR Rule 6.22; Adm 14; LR VI, 1; FLCI VIII, 1; ER VII, 13). Article 22 finally says: “Let this poverty alone be our portion because it leads to the land of the living” (TOR Rule 6.22; Jm 2:5).

#### **4.9 Fraternal Life**

The evangelical counsels define religious life as a life lived in community; in Franciscan terminology it is life lived in fraternity.<sup>77</sup> “The significance of the word fraternity in the vocabulary of Clare and Francis is found in their insights that Jesus became brother to all of us in the Incarnation” (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:62). Christ is the centre of community around whom the Brothers and Sisters gather (Cusack in Carney et al 2008:440).

The Chapter on Fraternal Life in the Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular begins with:

Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, “This is my precept, that you love one another as I have loved you” (TOR Rule 7.23).

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<sup>77</sup> The term fraternity comes from the Latin term *fraternitas* and means brotherliness.

For Franciscans the unity of the Brothers and Sisters in God is not simply about being nice to each other or being well behaved in relation to the other Brothers and Sisters. It is about God's love described in the First Letter of John (1 Jn 4:16): "God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him." To live in this loving union with God is only possible when the members of the fraternity keep the commandment: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12; ER XI, 5-6; TestCl 18). Observance of this commandment demands much of both laity and religious. Francis himself acknowledged in his prayer the difficulty of putting this task into practice:

As we forgive those who trespass against us: And what we do not completely forgive, make us, Lord, forgive completely that we may truly love our enemies because of You and we may fervently intercede for them before You, returning no one evil for evil and we may strive to help everyone in You (PrOF=A Prayer Inspired by the Our Father 8).

The Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular continues emphasizing that they should make their needs known to each other so that they can assist each other in their needs (TOR Rule 7.23). The Brothers and Sisters should also "love the others when they are sick and unable to serve" (TOR Rule 7.23; Adm XXIV). They should be grateful to the Creator for everything, whether they are sick or healthy (TOR Rule 7.23; ER X, 3).

A Brother or Sister who neglects their vow in a serious way must not be embarrassed, but treated with great mercy (TOR Rule 7.24; LtMin 15). And further, no one should become angry about a sin committed by another because: "For anger and disturbance impede charity in themselves and in others" (TOR Rule 7.24; LR VII, 3; FLCI IX, 5).

#### **4.10 Obedience in Love**

The Chapter on obedience, which follows the Chapter on fraternal life, is to be understood in the relationship that flows from the encounter with others and the encounter with God. Francis made this clear in his *Admonitions*: "For this is loving obedience because it pleases God and neighbour" (Adm III, 6). Just as love reaches out to God and neighbour obedience is also to be seen in its relationship to others and to God. In his *Salutation of Virtues*, Francis calls love and obedience sisters: "Lady holy Charity, may the Lord protect You, with Your Sister, holy Obedience (SaLV= A Salutation of Virtues 3). Obedience has its roots in the example of Christ himself. In the Gospel of John, Christ said: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work" (Jn 4:34; 2Ltf 10).

The introduction to this Chapter immediately engages with Christ's wholehearted response to obedience: "Following the example of the Lord Jesus who made his own will one

with the Father's, the brothers and sisters should remember that, for God, they have given up their own wills" (TOR Rule 8.25; LR X, 2; ER XVIII,1; FLCI X, 2). The TOR Rule then says that in their meetings, the Brothers and Sisters have first to seek the kingdom of God, or the reign of God and God's justice first – they have to listen to God's will, encourage each other "to follow faithfully in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ" (TOR Rule 8.25).

In Article 26 Francis tells the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular that the communities should always choose from among them a member to be a "minister and servant of the fraternity whom they are obliged to obey in all that they promised God to observe, and which is not contrary to conscience and this rule" (TOR Rule 8.26; LR VIII, 1; LR X, 3; FLCI X, 1).

Article 27 confirms how zealous Francis was in wanting the member chosen by the community to exercise the role of ministry in its duality as both servant and minister. The thrust of the Rule is to create a situation where all the Brothers and Sisters are to interact freely with each other and on equal terms, treating each other in a friendly and charitable spirit. This contrasts with the authoritarian tradition that was so common in religious life.

#### **4.11 Apostolic Life**

The title of this last Chapter of the TOR Rule, Apostolic Life, refers to the life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular as a whole and is not limited only to an apostolic activity or action. This Chapter is a culmination of all that was said in the preceding chapters of this Rule about the Franciscan identity, the evangelical counsels, the rootedness in prayer, the life in fraternity and the attitude towards service (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:69; Hardick 1987:174). "The poverty and obedience of Jesus" invites the Brothers and Sisters "to singlehearted consecration to his love. The life thus fashioned, will of necessity flow outward to others" (Carney & Horgan 1982/1997:69).

It is interesting to note that this Chapter on Apostolic Life begins in the same way as the Prologue of this Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis.<sup>78</sup> Both begin with the words Francis used to emphasise the love of God and neighbour when giving direction to the very first Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1LtF 1, 1) .

Article 29 of the Rule has significance for the following discussion on the Rule's vision for Franciscan Gospel life today:

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<sup>78</sup> 1LtF 1, 1.

The brothers and sisters are to love God with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves. Let them glorify God in all they do. Sent into the whole world by God, they should give witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all-powerful (TOR Rule 9.29; LtOrd 8-9).

In speaking of loving God with one's whole heart, soul and mind and of loving one's neighbour, Francis refers to the greatest commandment of all in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark (Mt 22:37-39 and Mk 12:30). "Sent into the whole world" (TOR Rule 9.29), they are to witness "God's voice" (TOR Rule 9.29), God's presence and power in the world (LtOrd 8-9). In Article 29 some insights of the Book of Tobit are integrated:

Declare his praise before the nations, you who are the sons of Israel! For if he has scattered you among them, there too he has shown you his greatness. Extol him before all the living; he is our Master and he is our God and he is our Father and he is God for ever and ever (Tb 13:3-4).

This text refers to the time when the people of Israel were in exile and were forced to interact with other nations. Even then, during this painful experience, they took this opportunity to make God known among the people, to "[e]xtol him before all the living" (Tb 13:4; Hardick 1987:177-178).

In his *Letter to the Entire Order* Francis speaks of "bearing witness to His voice in word and deed" (LtOrd 9) to the whole world. "God's voice" (TOR Rule 9.29) tells us something about God's creative power which we have already encountered in the Book of Genesis with its account of the creation of the world and humanity. Certain phrases are repeated to emphasise God's active presence in creation: "God said, 'Let there be [...]' and God saw that it was good" (Gen 1:3-26). Furthermore "God's voice" (TOR Rule 9.29) refers to the pre-existence of the Word in the Gospel of John: "In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him" (Jn 1:1-3). "God's voice" (TOR Rule 9.29) refers also to: "The Word was made flesh, he lived among us" (Jn 1:14).

Francis witnesses to the creative power of the Word of God in his *Canticle of the Creatures* (CtC). He witnesses the love of God in the Incarnate Word while recalling the birth of Christ as he did at Greccio (1C 84-87). In Francis's Gospel way of life in the footsteps of Christ, which is a total embrace of the Incarnate Word, he gives witness to the love and presence of God in the world.

The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular should understand themselves as those who were called by God to follow Christ, those who heard "God's voice" (TOR Rule

9.29). Their life, their words and their actions should witness to that call of God (ER XVII, 3; LtOrd 9; Hardick 1987: 180).

Article 30 refers to one of the early biographies of Francis, the *Legend of the Three Companions* (L3C 58):

As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to anger or insult on their account; rather, all should be moved to peace, kindness and harmony because of their gentleness (TOR Rule 9.30; L3C 58).

In order to follow the evangelical call to witness Christ to the world, to be peacemakers, the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular must first of all have peace within themselves. This again touches on the theme of ongoing conversion, of *metanoia*. Carney & Horgan see the relationship between *metanoia* and apostolic action as “the cornerstone of our Franciscan evangelical spirituality” (1982/1997:69).

Article 30 continues, also taken from the *Legend of the Three Companions* (L3C 58): “The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring” (TOR Rule 9.30; L3C 58). The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular have to make God’s love a reality, especially for those who are in need of healing and those who have lost their way.

Having given themselves totally to Christ (ER XVI, 10-12), the Brothers and Sisters are called to be ready for suffering and persecution for the sake of the kingdom (Mt 5:10; TOR Rule 9.30). This call taken from the *Earlier Rule* (ER XVI, 8-21) was originally addressed to those friars who were “to go among the Saracens and other nonbelievers” (ER XVI, 3).

Article 31 formulates the whole life of the Brothers and Sisters in the context of God’s love: “In the charity which God is, all the brothers and sisters, whether they are praying or serving or working, should strive to be humble in everything” (TOR Rule 9.31; ER XVII, 5-6). In this text taken from the *Earlier Rule*, Francis speaks to the Friars of praying, preaching and working (ER XVII, 5). *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* does not speak of preaching, but of serving because this is a particular dimension characterising the Third Order Regular.

“In the charity which God is, [...]” (TOR Rule 9.31) refers to the First Letter of John: “God is love and anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him (1Jn 4:16).” It also refers to the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians:

Planted in love and built on love, you will with all the saints have strength to grasp the breath and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge, you are filled with the utter fullness of God (Ep 3:17-19).

The Chapter on Apostolic Life ends with giving all honour to God:

They should not, because of good words, works, and even anything good that God does, speaks and works in and through them, seek glory or rejoice or exult interiorly. Rather, in every place and circumstance, let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high Lord God and Ruler of all things. Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds (TOR Rule 9.31).

This whole Chapter aims at giving witness to God's primacy in the world – God the all-powerful, God the all-loving and God incarnate in the world. God's primacy compels the Brothers and Sisters to love God and neighbour above all things. Whatever the Brothers and Sisters do, in word and in deed and by living their religious life, they are to do it for one purpose which is to make the love of God known to the world. This Chapter forms the foundation for living the Rule in the contemporary world which will be treated in Chapter 5, which is to be explored together with the significance of the Exhortation and Blessing under 4.12 which follows.

#### **4.12 Exhortation and Blessing**

The Brothers and Sisters “must desire to have the Spirit of God at work within them” (TOR Rule 32). This exhortation in *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* relates to the *Later Rule* (LR X, 8) of Francis for the Friars Minor and to the *Form of Life of Saint Clare* (FLCI X, 9). It symbolises the Spirit of God uniting the three Orders of St Francis in the same charism. The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular as well as the Friars Minor (LR XII, 4) and the Poor Clares (FLCI XII, 13) obedient to the Church, are to “observe the poverty and humility and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which they have firmly promised” (TOR Rule 32).

The Blessing of Francis's *Testament* (Test 40-41) closes the text of the Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular (TOR Rule 32). The significant words Francis dictated shortly before his death (Hardick 1987:195) also close the Rule because the newly revised Rule is spirit of his spirit and mostly word of his word, with Sacred Scripture as its seminal source:

Whoever will observe these things shall be filled with the blessings of the most high Father in heaven, and on earth with the blessing of the beloved Son, with the most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete and with all virtues of heaven and with all the saints.

And I, little Brother Francis, your servant, in so far as I am able, confirm to you within and without this most holy blessing (TOR Rule 32; Test 40-41).

The values for Franciscan religious life which have been discussed in the context of the Rule for the Third Order show that Gospel values are at the heart of this life.

In remaining open to the work of the Holy Spirit, with the Rule as their spiritual sustenance, the Brothers and Sisters will be inspired to follow the footsteps of Christ into loving union with the Father.



## 5. The Rule's vision for Franciscan Gospel life today

*The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis* is based on the writings of Francis and Clare of Assisi which in turn are rooted in Sacred Scripture. The Word of God is given to us for all times and for that reason this *Rule and Life* must also apply to our day and age.

The mission of the members of the Third Order Regular is to witness Christ to the people of today through their vowed Gospel life and ministry in the spirit of their founder Francis of Assisi. Thus, they focus on the Christ of the Gospel, the spiritual tradition of Francis and Clare, and on the lives, challenges and problems of the people of today – or contemporary humanity (Iammarrone 1995:351).

As Franciscan followers and witnesses of Christ “[t]hey are sustained by St Francis, whose fundamental experience of Jesus Christ coloured his experience of God, humanity and the world” (Iammarrone 1995:351). The writings of Francis, which resurfaced through Esser in the 1950s, and the newly revised Rule of 1982 based on those writings, help to orientate the Brothers and Sisters to Francis’s “fundamental experience of the poor and humble Jesus” (:351) and to Francis’s experience of God’s radical love for the world in Christ. This radical love calls for a total surrender that “points to God as the supreme value” (:351). The newly revised Rule helps them to discover their role as witnesses and prophets of God the Absolute, the *unicum necessarium* (:352), in the midst of a troubled and secularised world. They are prophetic when they are witnesses of God who is true Father and of the Trinity who is love and goodness and “who is the source of life and joy for all creatures” (:352).

“At the heart of the life of God there is uncontainable joy” (OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:23) and so TOR Brothers and Sisters are called to bring this God of life, love, goodness, joy and peace into their fraternities and into the world. They are specifically called to “manifest God’s special love for poor people” (Wroblewski & Karecki 2001b:19). Their work of evangelisation here means “to incarnate the Gospel” (OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:39) in our society in the spirit of the Rule’s vision for the Brothers and Sisters: to witness Christ the Incarnate to the world of today as prophets of God’s love and joy.

It is indispensable that the fraternities of Brothers and Sisters live the Gospel themselves in a spirit of ongoing conversion, or *metanoia*, in order to be evangelising communities who witness God’s love to the world (Wroblewski & Karecki 2001b:19).

Vatican II in its *Decree on the Renewal of the Religious Life* of 1965 counselled the religious institutes to remain faithful to the spirit and charism of their founders and drink from their own spiritual sources (PC<sup>1</sup> 2b). The Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order

Regular followed that counsel by revising their Rule based on the medieval writings of Francis and Clare. A comparison between Vatican II documents, the documents of subsequent Synods and the Rule for the Third Order Regular, based on medieval writings, shows a remarkable affinity in expressing the crucial elements of religious life and ministry. The centuries old vision of Franciscan Gospel living and ministry finds affirming renewal in these contemporary church documents.

*The Decree on the Renewal of the Religious Life* of Vatican II of 1965 concludes by saying that religious are to be rooted in faith, love God and neighbour and have “love for the cross” in order to witness Christ to the world. Parallels exist between the statement of Vatican II (PC<sup>1</sup> 25) and the Rule in emphasising “true faith” (TOR Rule 1.1) and faithful unity with the Church (TOR Rule 1.3). Both the Prologue of the Rule (1LtF) and the last Chapter on Apostolic Life (TOR Rule 9.29) emphasise the Commandment to love both God and neighbour. TOR members are further called to take up their cross and follow the *kenotic* Christ (TOR Rule 2.5). In that way they give witness to the “love for the cross” that is integral to the consecrated life.

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata on the Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World* begins:

The Consecrated Life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father to his Church through the Holy Spirit. By the profession of the evangelical counsels the *characteristic features of Jesus* – the chaste, poor and obedient one – *are made constantly “visible” in the midst of the world* and the eyes of the faithful are directed towards the mystery of the Kingdom of God already at work in history, even as it awaits its full realization in heaven (VC 1).

The very first sentence of the *Vita Consecrata* of 1996 sounds remarkably familiar to all Franciscans. It reminds them of the phrase Francis uses to begin his *Earlier Rule* for the Friars Minor, which developed between 1209 and 1221, and runs through his writings as a constant theme: “to follow the teaching and the footprints of Our Lord Jesus Christ” (ER I, 1), in Latin: *Domini nostri Jesu Christi doctrinam et vestigia* (Wroblewski & Karecki 2000:10). This expression “to follow Christ” is also found in *The Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular* (TOR Rule 1.1, 3.13, 8.25).

That consecrated life “is a gift of God” has parallels in the Rule when it reminds the members that they are called by “the Lord’s inspiration” (TOR Rule 2.4).

Making Christ “visible” in the world and showing “the mystery of the Kingdom of God at work in history” (VC 1) by living the evangelical counsels shares similarities with the

TOR Rule when it urges the Brothers and Sisters to give witness “to God’s voice and make known to all that only God is all-powerful” (TOR Rule 9.29).

Further similarities to the TOR Rule are to be seen in *Vita Consecrata* when it speaks of consecrated life lived “[i]n the Church and for the Church” (VC 29-34; TOR Rule 1.2, 1.3) and of “Fraternal life in love” (VC 42; TOR Rule 7.23-24).

The consecrated life has a prophetic dimension because it is a reminder of the life of Christ and of his ministry (McGarry 1996:42; VC 22). The *Vita Consecrata* defines a consecrated person as one who “affirm[s] decisively the primacy of God [...] through following the chaste, poor and obedient Christ” (McGarry 1996:51) as a “prophetic witness” (VC 84-95). When living the evangelical counsels in a radical way, the TOR Brothers and Sisters point “to God as the only absolute” (McGarry 1996:51; VC 87; TOR Rule 4.14-16, 9.29).

The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* on the Church in Africa in service to reconciliation, justice and peace was published in 2011 as an outcome of the Second African Synod in 2009. *Africae Munus* affirms that through the religious vows, the life of consecrated people “becomes a prophetic witness” (AM 117). In this document Pope Benedict XVI asks consecrated persons in Africa to follow faithfully the charism, idea and vision of their founders and foundresses. He emphasises “the important role of consecrated persons in the life of the Church and in her missionary endeavour” (AM 118). He acknowledges that religious are “a necessary and precious aid to the Church’s pastoral activity”, but he also points out the witnessing character of consecrated life, that it is “a manifestation of the deepest nature of our Christian vocation” (AM 118). Vatican II emphasised that all Christians are called to be witnesses of Christ.

*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Lumen Gentium, The Light of the Nations*, is the central document of Vatican II of 1964. It states that all Christians are called to participate in the mission of Christ, the lay people being full participants. Consecrated in baptism all share in the priesthood, the kingship and the prophetic role of Jesus Christ (LG=Lumen Gentium 4).

*The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, Ad Gentes, Sent to the Nations of the World*, also a document of Vatican II of 1965, points out that all Christians are sent to give witness, not only by preaching but also by the example of one’s life:

For all Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new man put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at Confirmation (AG=Ad Gentes II, 11).

Some 45 years after Vatican II *Africae Munus* renews the emphasis on ongoing conversion in order to live the Gospel and witness Christ in Africa:

The principal concern of the Synod members, as they looked to the situation of the continent, was to seek ways of inspiring in Christ's disciples in Africa the will to become effectively committed to living out the Gospel in their daily lives and in society. Christ calls constantly for *metanoia*, conversion. Christians are affected by the spirit and customs of their time and place. But by the grace of their Baptism they are called to reject harmful prevailing currents and to swim against the tide. This kind of witness demands unswerving commitment in "ongoing conversion to the Father, the source of true life, who alone is capable of delivering us from evil and all temptations, and keeping us in his Spirit, in the very heart of the struggle against the forces of evil" (AM 32).

The document continues with an emphasis on catechesis, the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist and on the Word of God. It is remarkable that this document on the Church in Africa, speaks a language similar to that used by Francis when he addressed the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1LtF, 2LtF) on an ongoing conversion which entails the love of God and neighbour and receiving the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation and so giving birth to Christ in the world (1LtF 1, 8).

This text is an inspiration for the Secular Franciscans, those who are not committed to the consecrated life, to "[live] out the Gospel in their daily lives and in society" (AM 32) and give witness to Christ in the troubled African Continent.

This text of *Africae Munus* also addresses the members of the Third Order Regular of St Francis who are called "to manifest the deepest nature of [the] Christian vocation" (AM 118) by living the evangelical counsels. By their consecrated Gospel life and ministry they are called to witness God's voice to the people in Africa "and make known to all that only God is all-powerful" (TOR Rule 9.29; LtOrd 8-9).

The following Chapter will discuss the witnessing of Christ through specific elements of Franciscan spirituality, especially the vowed Gospel life and ministry of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of St Francis wherever they are in the world.

### **5.1 Witnessing Christ through a life of poverty, simplicity and sharing**

In order to witness the Christ of the Gospel and be signs of God's primacy in the world, the true Franciscan lifestyle of the TOR members needs to shine with a sensitive simplicity that goes against the stream of a society reconstructing itself with the values of crass consumerism and unrestrained money-making that are hardening the heart of great sections of humanity in the face of dire poverty. The *Vita Consecrata* speaks of the challenge "of a materialism which craves possessions, heedless of the needs and sufferings of the weakest, and lacking any concern for the balance of natural resources" (VC 89).

According to Donal Dorr a simple lifestyle has to do with "the kind of food we eat, the clothes we wear [and] the way our homes are furnished" (in Rozansky 1999:47). It includes sharing with the poor and unfortunate (TOR Rule 5.19) and promoting an "economy of solidarity" (OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:10, 11) worldwide which focuses on "a world ethic that is based on respect for the inviolable dignity of the human person" (:11). Furthermore, the Franciscan way of life must show love and care for the environment and the whole of God's creation.

The life in simplicity will radiate joy to others who might experience emptiness and sadness in the midst of a society that seeks and indulges in pleasure (Iammarrone 1995:354). It will be prophetic because it will contrast Franciscan simplicity and the simplicity extolled by *Vita Consecrata* with such a society by pointing to God as the fullness of life, love and joy.

### **5.2 Witnessing Christ as a community characterised by minority**

The members of the Third Order Regular are called to live their life in community and this as minors, which means as "lesser ones". This community life is based on their experience of the love of the poor and humble Christ and thus on the Trinitarian love. Therefore it should be marked by "humility, acceptance, forgiveness and [true] communion" (Iammarrone 1995:353). Christ said: "It is by your love for one another, that everyone will recognise you as my disciples" (Jn 13:35). Consequently the fruitfulness of evangelisation, of witnessing Christ to the world, depends very much on the "quality of the community" (Karecki & Wroblewski 2001b:19).

The early Franciscan fraternity included brothers of different social backgrounds and educational levels on an equal basis (Lawrence 1994:35). Likewise the members of the Franciscan communities today are exhorted to treat and serve one another with respect and

love. To be “lesser ones” means to serve out of love and this service is not to be limited to the community, but also reach out to the Church and to the world of today.

In that way a community characterised by minority and loving service, based on the *kenotic* love of Christ, is a prophetic sign to the world, a sign that points “to a dimension beyond” (Iammarrone 1995:354), to God and his love and promotes “encounter, peacemaking and reconciliation” (:354).

### **5.3 Witnessing Christ by promoting dialogue and peace**

Just as Francis was concerned to make peace with the Sultan at the time of the siege of Damietta in 1219 (1C 57), so the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular, as witnesses of Christ, need to promote peace and dialogue with other faiths, with the different Christian denominations as well as with people without belief.

*Africae Munus* says persons of consecrated life “can be examples in the area of reconciliation, justice and peace, even in circumstances marked by great tension” (AM 117). To fully live out their charism, to be agents of solidarity through *caritas*, or compassion for a just cause, the members of the Third Order need to engage in the movements of Justice and Peace that promote just conditions of life for all.

Furthermore, they have to continue the dialogue between cultures “especially where today’s world is torn apart by ethnic hatred or senseless violence” (VC 51a; OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:37). Communities in which brothers and sisters of different cultures share their lives can be a prophetic sign and model for living together in peace (OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:40; AM 117).

### **5.4 Witnessing Christ through solidarity with the poor and marginalised**

Francis’s way of evangelisation was prophetic rather than clerical as can be seen when we reflect on his actions in nursing the lepers (Micó 1996a:22). He “brought to outcasts a recognition of their own true value as human persons” (Mulholland 2001:81). In the early days, the Friars in Europe lived near the town walls, where the marginalised people of society – the poor, the refugees and the new arrivals – were to be found. The Friars made it their ministry to care for these people.

Today the Franciscans, particularly the TOR members, are challenged to be present among the poor and marginalised of our day and age and to minister to them. The document of *Africae munus* reads:

In the spirit of the Beatitudes, preferential attention is to be given to the poor, the hungry, the sick – for example, those with AIDS, tuberculosis or malaria – to the stranger, the disadvantaged, the prisoner, the immigrant who is looked down upon, the refugee or displaced person (Mt 25:31-46; AM 27).

The reality of this ministry today extends to wherever we find people living, or simply surviving, on the streets and under bridges, jobless and homeless, crammed together in mass informal settlements and refugee camps, disintegrating through drugs and alcoholism, wretched with HIV/AIDS, children and women abused and violated – signs of adversity and distress to be found in wealthy countries and in poor countries.

In making the charism of their founder a lived reality today, members of the Franciscan Order, the consecrated religious and the Secular Franciscans, minister to the homeless, to adults and children living on the streets, to the men and women in old age homes or in their own homes, to the sick in hospitals or at home, and to the young in children's homes or child care centres. Their ministry is a caring embrace of people with HIV/AIDS and TB, in care centres, in their homes, in isolated rural homesteads (TOR Rule 6.21). Just to be present among the “excluded” (Mulholland 2001:81) people of society is an active way of showing solidarity with their human dignity. For Dorr, to live in solidarity with the poor today raises the question of “the area in which we live, the friends we cultivate, the kinds of work we undertake, and the attitudes and style we adopt in doing all these things” (in Rozansky 1999:47). Living in solidarity with the poor and marginalised, and being present among them, is intended to be a witness to society that it must not forget their brothers and sisters living in distressing circumstances – for these are among the least of Christ's brethren that Francis committed himself to serving.

### **5.5 A creative witnessing of Christ through ministry to the world of the 21st century**

Francis's ministry was characterised by inclusivity for he also attended to people who were not living on the margin of society. He sought their wellbeing by providing “a standard of conduct and a sense of spiritual purpose for the growing middle class by preaching penance to the crowds and counselling individuals” (Micó 1996a:22). His approach has utmost importance today to counter the trend among young people and adults who live lives that have little or no meaning which they experience in different ways (Micó 1996b:132-133). The world they inhabit appears to be disconnected from the reality of the world around them. Especially in the Western world, which has developed on the scaffolding of an old Christian tradition it is abandoning, most of “the intellectuals, the working class, the young, etc.” (:132)

no longer orientate themselves on the Christian faith and values. To be able “to communicate the Gospel message” (:133) to them, we need to find “a new language as well as new symbols” (:133) which are understood by them. We cannot approach them with doctrines, but rather with “our traditional Franciscan [ways] of service and minority” (:133). Franciscans as witnesses of Christ need to work with the youth of today in their aimlessness and pursuit of shallow and instant gratification, in their problems which arise from a threatening and partly violent society, and enrich and guide them in a language that has meaning for their lives and situations. The need is for a language that is communicable to minds that have been alienated.

In less developed countries “evangelisation must continue to be accompanied by humanitarian assistance” (Micó 1996b:132).

The ways of Franciscan ministry are not limited as “there is nothing further from Franciscanism than a uniform and homogenous vision in the methods of evangelisation” (OFM *Capitulum Generale* 2003:39). Creativity and spontaneity are encouraged to gain fresh and renewed insights into the work of evangelisation.

For some, the Franciscan way of life might include the call to be a missionary in a distant country. Others are called to witness Christ at home in the family, at work and in the community around them as practised by the Secular Franciscans. On the other hand the Poor Clares are called to a life of contemplation and to witness Christ to the world as a praying community which also nourishes and renews heart and soul through spiritual retreats.

## **5.6 Witnessing Christ through the contemplative aspect of the Franciscan Gospel life**

In order to witness Christ to the people of today all the members of the Franciscan family need to focus on Christ incarnate, crucified and risen as well as the Christ of the Eucharist and the Beatitudes. Therefore it is basic tenet that their life is shaped by prayer and contemplation, meditation on the Scriptures and that it is nourished by the Eucharist and sustained by the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Moreover, the essential Franciscan way of life has a contemplative dimension.<sup>79</sup> For the Franciscan followers and witnesses of Christ, contemplation cannot be reduced to their prayer life, which is indispensable of course, but it concerns their whole life of total surrender to God as a loving response to the love of God they have experienced in Christ. It is about the “radical love that chooses poverty and humility in order to possess the God who is perfect goodness and love” (Iammarrone 1995:348). In that way their life praises and witnesses the

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<sup>79</sup> This aspect is to be found in Chapter 2.2.6 of this research.



Trinitarian God who is love and “goodness that gives without measure” (:348), humanity’s “supreme and only good – the God who makes the human heart dance and sing, even amid trials and uncertainties, because he is the ‘Most High, good Lord,’ the hope and glory of all humanity” (:352).

Franciscans are not alone in their continuing search for new and renewing ways of witnessing the *kenotic* Christ in the world today. They continue on a journey they share with other religious orders in seeking to live the Gospel life in ministry to themselves and to the world they share in all its cosmopolitan diversity.

In 1994 leaders of women and men religious gathered in the United States to discern the important elements of religious life in the future, with a focus on the year 2010. The leaders represented the 130 000 women religious and 30 000 men religious belonging to various religious institutes, each with their own charism and history. They discerned and wrote down 10 elements which they considered important for religious life in the future. What they discerned shows remarkable similarities to the Franciscan way of life. Prophetic witness to Christ was determined as the element with the highest priority. Their statement on the prophetic witness of religious life puts conversion first. It reads:

Being converted by the example of Jesus and the values of the gospel, religious in the year 2010 will serve a prophetic role in church and in society (Tonna in Yuhaus 1994:56).

This requirement for conversion has a deep affinity with the Franciscan charism which requires ongoing conversion in order to continue to witness Christ to the world. For the religious of the United States this conversion is orientated to Jesus and the Gospel values which are also at the heart of Franciscan spirituality. This 1994 gathering understood that religious are to be “converted by the marginalised” with whom they serve (Tonna in Yuhaus 1994:56). This reminds us of Francis’s experience with the leper and his conversion process (Test 1-3) which shaped Franciscan spirituality and is rooted in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ: “The Word became flesh, he lived among us” (Jn 1:14).

The Christian life today, for religious and laity, wherever we are, continues to mean that we must see Christ in all situations, in all times, in all humanity’s diversity of faces, just as Francis saw the *kenotic* Christ in the leper - his moment of radical conversion. In that single act of *metanoia* are the seeds of our own ongoing conversion as followers of Francis and Clare and their Gospel life in the footsteps of Christ.

## 6. Conclusion

This journey with Francis and Clare of Assisi from medieval times to the present ends with the conclusion that the renewal of the Rule for the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular in contemporary times has restored the *kenotic* Christ as the inspiration for Franciscan life to follow His footprints “along the path of the Gospel”.<sup>80</sup> A significant moment of this renewal came with the revision of the Rule in 1982, which represented a return to roots in basing it on the writings of Francis and Clare themselves which are grounded in Scripture.

The universality of this Franciscan Gospel life is expressed so profoundly when the Friars answer Lady Poverty’s question “where is your cloister” by taking her to the hill where they show her the world below and tell her: “This, Lady, is our enclosure”.<sup>81</sup> In time Franciscans have reformulated this to be: “The world is our cloister.” Through their consecrated life and ministry, particularly by their presence of caring solidarity with the poor and marginalised, they are witnesses to God’s voice in our troubled and secularised world.

To be fully alive in the spirit of Franciscan Gospel life today, to be able to embrace the lepers of our day and age, requires the Brothers and Sisters to live in ongoing conversion to give new birth to Christ the Incarnate Word that was made flesh and dwells among us.

Integral to the values of Franciscan Gospel life is the document *Vita Consecrata* which flows from the Synod of Bishops in 1994 and is directed at the heart of renewal in religious life. In this document Pope John Paul II says: “The more one lives in Christ, the better one can serve Him in others, going even to the furthest outposts and facing the greatest dangers” (VC 76). I would understand this as an invitation to all religious to co-operate with each other to reach “the furthest outposts” of evangelisation in a spirit of courage and solidarity that becomes a ministry of love and service to all that is rooted in Christ.

Led by the Spirit, and in sharing the charism of Francis and Clare, the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular follow the footprints of Christ on a journey that draws them into union with God the Father in love and praise.

How to end this reflection on Franciscan spirituality for our times? What comes to mind are Francis’s own words to his brothers at the end of his life:

“I have done what is mine; may Christ teach you what is yours” (2C 214).

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<sup>80</sup> Micó 1993c:271.

<sup>81</sup> ScEx=The Sacred Exchange between Saint Francis and Lady Poverty (ScEx 63).

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## **Appendix 1**

### **RULE AND LIFE OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS**

#### **POPE JOHN PAUL II AS A PERPETUAL MEMORIAL**

Much as in past centuries, the Franciscan proposal of life even in our times continually draws many men and women desirous of evangelical perfection and thirsting for the reign of God. Inspired by the example of Saint Francis of Assisi, the members of the Third Order Regular set forth to follow Jesus Christ by living in fraternal communion, professing the observance of the evangelical counsels of obedience, poverty and chastity in public vows, and by giving themselves to innumerable expressions of apostolic activity. To actualise in the best way possible their chosen way of life, they dedicate themselves unreservedly to prayer, strive to grow in fraternal love, live true penance and cultivate Christian self-denial.

Since these very elements and motives for living the Franciscan proposal are clearly present in the “Rule and Life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis” and since they are clearly in accord with the genuine Franciscan spirit, we, in the fullness of our apostolic authority, determine, declare and order that the present Rule have the force and importance to illustrate to the Brothers and Sisters this authentic meaning of the Franciscan life, while bearing in mind what our predecessors Leo X and Pius XI, with the Apostolic Constitutions *Inter cetera* and *Rerum conditio* presented on this matter in their own times.

Since we know how diligently and assiduously this “Rule and Life” has travelled its path of *aggiornamento* and how fortuitously it arrived at the desired convergence of different points of view through collegial discussion and consultation, proposals and studied amendments, for this reason with well-founded hope, we trust that the longed for fruits of renewal will be brought to full realization.

We decide, moreover, that this our decision have force from this moment on and be effectively binding both in the present and in the future, everything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter’s under the ring of the Fisherman, on the 8<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1982, the fifth year of Our pontificate.



## **RULE AND LIFE OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS**

### **WORDS OF ST. FRANCIS TO HIS FOLLOWERS<sup>82</sup>**

All who love God with their whole heart, with their whole soul and mind, and with their whole strength (Mt 12:30), and love their neighbour as themselves (Mt 22:39), and who despise their tendency to vice and sin, receive the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and bring forth from with themselves fruits worthy of true penance: How happy and blessed are these men and women when they do these things, and persevere in doing them because the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon them (Is 11:2) and God will make a home and dwelling place (Jn 14:23) with them. They are the children of the heavenly Father (Mt 5:45) whose works they do. They are the spouses, brothers and sisters, and mothers of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mt 12:50).

We are spouses when the faithful soul is united by the Holy Spirit with our Lord Jesus Christ. We are for him brothers and sisters when we do the will of the Father who is in heaven (Mt 12:50). We are mothers when we bear Him in our hearts and bodies (1 Cor 6:20) with divine love and with pure and sincere consciences, and when we give birth to Him through our holy actions which must shine in example to others (Mt 5:16).

How glorious it is, how holy and great, to have a Father in heaven! How holy, consoling, beautiful and wonderful it is to have such a Spouse! How holy and how loving, pleasing, humble, peaceful, sweet, lovable and over all things desirable it is to have such a Brother and such a Son, our Lord Jesus Christ who gave up His life for His sheep (Jn 10:15) and prayed to the Father, saying: Holy Father, keep in your name (Jn 17:11) those whom You gave Me in the world; they are Yours and You gave them to Me (Jn 17:6). And the words which You gave Me I gave to them, and they accepted and truly believed that I came from You. And they know that You have sent Me (Jn 17:8). I pray for them and not for the world (Jn 17:9). Bless them and sanctify them (Jn 17:17). I sanctify Myself for their sakes (Jn 17:19). I do not pray only for these but also for those who, through their word, will believe in Me (Jn 17:20), may they be holy in oneness (Jn 17:23) as We are Father (Jn 17:11), I want that where I am they too may be with Me so that they may see My glory (Jn 17:24) in Your reign (Mt 20:21). Amen.

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<sup>82</sup>1LtF 1

# **I IN THE NAME OF THE LORD! HERE BEGINS THE RULE AND LIFE OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE THIRD ORDER REGULAR OF SAINT FRANCIS**

1. The form of life of the Brothers and Sisters of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis is this: to observe the Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, living in obedience, in poverty and in chastity.<sup>83</sup> Following Jesus Christ at the example of Saint Francis,<sup>84</sup> they are held to do more and greater things in observing the precepts and counsels of our Lord Jesus Christ. They must deny themselves (Mt 16:24) as each has promised God.<sup>85</sup>

2. With all in the holy Catholic and apostolic Church who want to serve God, the brothers and sisters of this Order are to persevere in true faith and penance.<sup>86</sup> They want to live this evangelical conversion of life in a spirit of prayer, of poverty, and of humility. Let them abstain from all evil and persevere to the end in doing good<sup>87</sup> because God's Son Himself will come again in glory and will say to all who acknowledged, adored and served him in penance: Come, blessed of My Father, receive the reign that has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world (Mt 25:34).<sup>88</sup>

3. The brothers and sisters promise obedience and reverence to the Pope and the Catholic Church. In this same spirit they are to obey those who have been placed in the service of the fraternity.<sup>89</sup> And wherever they are, or in whatever situation they are in, they should spiritually and diligently show respect and honor to one another.<sup>90</sup> They should also foster unity and communion with all the members of the Franciscan family.

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<sup>83</sup> LR I, 1; ER I, 1; FLC I, 2.

<sup>84</sup> FLC I, VI, 1.

<sup>85</sup> 2LrF 36-40.

<sup>86</sup> ER XXIII, 7.

<sup>87</sup> ER XXI, 9.

<sup>88</sup> ER XXIII, 4.

<sup>89</sup> LR I, 2-3; FLC I, 3-5.

<sup>90</sup> ER VII, 15; LR VI, 7-8.

## II ACCEPTANCE INTO THIS LIFE

4. Those who through the Lord's inspiration come to us wanting to accept this way of life are to be received kindly. At the appropriate time, they will be presented to the ministers who hold power in the fraternity.<sup>91</sup>

5. The ministers shall ascertain that the aspirants truly adhere to the Catholic faith and the Church's sacramental life. If the aspirants are found fitting, they are to be initiated into the life of the fraternity. Let everything pertaining to this Gospel way of life be diligently explained to them, especially these words of the Lord: If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give to the poor (Mt 19:21; Lk 18:22). You will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me. And if anyone wants to come after Me, one must deny oneself, take up one's cross and follow Me (Mt 16:24).<sup>92</sup>

6. Led by God, let them begin a life of penance, conscious that all of us must be continuously converted. As a sign of their conversion and consecration to Gospel life, they are to clothe themselves plainly and to live in simplicity.<sup>93</sup>

7. When their initial formation is completed, they are to be received into obedience promising to observe this life and rule always.<sup>94</sup> Let them put aside all preoccupations and worries. Let them only be concerned to serve, love, honor, and adore God, as best they can, with a single heart and a pure mind.<sup>95</sup>

8. Within themselves, let them always make a home and dwelling place for the one who is Lord God almighty, Father and Son and Holy Spirit so that,<sup>96</sup> with undivided hearts, they may grow in universal love by continually turning to God and to neighbour (Jn 14:23).

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<sup>91</sup> Test 1; ER II, 1-3; LR II, 1; FLCI II, 1.

<sup>92</sup> LR II, 2-6; FLCI II, 2-4; ER I, 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> ER II, 14.

<sup>94</sup> LR II, 11; FLCI II, 8.

<sup>95</sup> ER XXII, 26; Adm XVI.

<sup>96</sup> ER XXII, 27; 1LtF I, 5-10; 2LtF 48-53.

### III SPIRIT OF PRAYER

9. Everywhere and in all places, at all times and in all seasons the brothers and sisters are to have a true and humble faith. From the depths of their inner life let them love, honor, adore, serve, praise, bless and glorify the most high and sovereign God, eternal Father and Son and Holy Spirit.<sup>97</sup> With all that they are, let them adore God because we should pray always and not lose heart (Lk 18:1): this is what God desires.<sup>98</sup> In this same spirit let them also celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours in union with the universal Church. Those whom the Lord has called to the life of contemplation (Mk 6:31), with a daily renewed joy should manifest their dedication to God and celebrate the love that God has for the world, when God created us, redeemed us, and will save us by mercy alone.<sup>99</sup>

10. With all creation the brothers and sisters should praise God Ruler of heaven and earth (Mt 11:25), and give thanks because, by the holy will and through the only Son with the Holy Spirit, God created all things spiritual and material, and created us in God's image and likeness.<sup>100</sup>

11. Since the brothers and sisters are to be totally conformed to the Holy Gospel, they should reflect upon and keep in their mind the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Who is the word of the Father, as well as the words of the Holy Spirit which are spirit and life (Jn 6:63).<sup>101</sup>

12. Let them participate in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ and receive His Body and Blood with great humility and veneration remembering the words of the Lord: Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life (Jn 6:54).<sup>102</sup> Moreover, they are to show the greatest possible reverence and honor for the most sacred name, written words and most holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things in heaven and on earth have been brought to peace and reconciliation with Almighty God (Col 1:20).<sup>103</sup>

13. Whenever they commit sin the brothers and sisters, without delay, are to do penance interiorly by sincere sorrow and exteriorly by confession. They should also do worthy deeds

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<sup>97</sup> ER XXIII, 11.

<sup>98</sup> ER XXII, 29-30.

<sup>99</sup> ER XXIII, 8.

<sup>100</sup> ER XXIII, 1; CtC 3.

<sup>101</sup> 2LtF 3.

<sup>102</sup> ER XX, 5.

<sup>103</sup> LtOrd 12-13; 1LtF 1; Test 12.

that manifest their repentance.<sup>104</sup> They should fast but always strive to be simple and humble.<sup>105</sup> They should desire nothing else but our Saviour, who offered Himself in His own Blood as a sacrifice and victim on the altar of the Cross for our sins, giving us example so that we might follow in His footsteps.<sup>106</sup>

#### **IV LIFE IN CHASTITY FOR THE SAKE OF THE REIGN OF GOD**

14. Let the brothers and sisters keep in mind how great a dignity God has given them because God created them and formed them in the image of the beloved Son according to the flesh and in God's own likeness according to the Spirit (Col 1:16).<sup>107</sup> Since they are created through Christ and in Christ, they have chosen this form of life which is founded on the words and example of our Redeemer.

15. Professing chastity for the sake of the reign of God (Mt 19:12), they are to care for the things of the Lord and they seek nothing else except to follow the will of God and to please God (1 Cor 7:32).<sup>108</sup> In all of their works charity toward God and all people should shine forth.

16. They are to remember that they have been called by a special gift of grace to manifest in their lives that wonderful mystery by which the Church is joined to Christ her divine spouse (Eph 5:23-26).

17. Let them keep the example of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, ever before their eyes. Let them do this according to the mandate of Blessed Francis who held Holy Mary, Lady and Queen, in highest veneration, since she is the virgin made church.<sup>109</sup> Let them also remember that the Immaculate Virgin Mary whose example they are to follow called herself the handmaid of the Lord (Lk 1:38).

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<sup>104</sup> Adm XXIII, 3; 2LtF 25.

<sup>105</sup> Adm XIX, 2; 2LtF 45.

<sup>106</sup> ER XXIII, 9; 2LtF 11-14.

<sup>107</sup> Adm V, 1.

<sup>108</sup> ER XXII, 9.

<sup>109</sup> SalBVM 1.

## V WAY TO SERVE AND WORK

18. As poor people, the brothers and sisters to whom God has given the grace of serving and working should serve and work faithfully and devoutly so that, while avoiding idleness, the enemy of the soul, they should not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion, that all material goods must serve.<sup>110</sup>

19. In exchange for their work, they may accept anything necessary for their own material needs and for that of their brothers and sisters. Let them accept it humbly as is expected of those who are servants of God and followers of the most holy poverty.<sup>111</sup> Whatever they may have over and above their needs, they are to give to the poor. And let them never want to be over others. Instead they must be servants and subjects to every human creature for God's sake (1Pt 2:13).<sup>112</sup>

20. Let the brothers and sisters be mild, peaceful and unassuming, gentle and humble, speaking honestly to all in accord with their vocation. Wherever they are, or wherever they go throughout the world they should not be quarrelsome, contentious, or judgmental towards others. Rather, it should be obvious that they are joyful, good-humoured, and happy in the Lord, as they ought to be (Phil 4:4).<sup>113</sup> And in greeting others, let them say, the Lord give you peace.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> LR V, 1-2; FLCI VII, 1-2.

<sup>111</sup> ER II, 4; IX, 8.

<sup>112</sup> 2LtF 47.

<sup>113</sup> LR II, 17; III, 10; ER VII, 16.

<sup>114</sup> Test 23.

## VI. LIFE IN POVERTY

21. Let all the brothers and sisters zealously follow the humility and poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though rich beyond measure (2 Cor 8:9), with the most blessed Virgin, His mother, He wanted to choose poverty in this world and he emptied Himself (Phil 2:7).<sup>115</sup> Let them remember that of the whole world we shall have nothing but as the Apostle says, having something to eat and something to wear, with these we are content (1 Tm 6:8).<sup>116</sup> Let them particularly beware of money.<sup>117</sup> And let them be happy to live among the outcast and despised, among the poor, the weak, the sick, the lepers and those who beg on the street.<sup>118</sup>

22. The truly poor in spirit, following the example of the Lord, neither appropriate nor defend anything as their own, but live in this world as pilgrims and strangers (1 Pt 2:1). So excellent is this most high poverty that it made us heirs and rulers of the reign of God. It made us materially poor, but rich in virtue (Jas 2:5). Let this poverty alone be our portion because it leads to the land of the living (Ps 141:6). Clinging completely to it let us, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, never want anything else under heaven (Mt 10:27-29).<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> ER IX, 1; 2LrF 5; FLCI VI, 3.

<sup>116</sup> LR VI, 3-4.

<sup>117</sup> ER IX, 1; LR VI, 3-4; ER VIII, 11.

<sup>118</sup> ER IX, 2.

<sup>119</sup> LR VI, 1-2; 4-6; ER VII, 13; Adm XIV; FLCI VIII, 1-2.

## VII FRATERNAL LIFE

23. Because God loves us, the brothers and sisters should love each other, for the Lord says, “This is my precept, that you love one another as I have loved you (Jn 15:12).” Let them manifest their love for each other in deeds (1 Jn 3:18).<sup>120</sup> With confidence let them make known their needs to one another so that each can find and offer to the other that which is necessary.<sup>121</sup> Blessed are those who love the others when they are sick and unable to serve, as much as when they are healthy and of service to them. Whether in sickness or in health, they should only want what God<sup>122</sup> wishes for them. For all that happens to them let them give thanks to our Creator.<sup>123</sup>

24. If discord caused by word or deed should occur among them, they should immediately and humbly ask forgiveness of one another (Mt 18:35) even before offering their gift of prayer before God (Mt 5:24). If anyone seriously neglected the form of life all professed, the minister, or others who may know of it, are to admonish that person. Those giving the admonition should neither embarrass nor speak evil of the other, but show great mercy.<sup>124</sup> Let all be carefully attentive not to become angry or disturbed because of another’s sin. For anger and disturbance impede charity in themselves and in others.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> ER XI, 5-6; TestCl 18.

<sup>121</sup> ER IX, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Adm XXIV.

<sup>123</sup> ER X, 3.

<sup>124</sup> LtMin 15.

<sup>125</sup> LR VII, 3; FLCI IX, 3-4.



## VIII OBEDIENCE IN LOVE

25. Following the example of the Lord Jesus who made his own will one with the Father's,<sup>126</sup> the brothers and sisters should remember that, for God, they have given up their own wills.<sup>127</sup> Therefore, in every Chapter they have let them seek first God's reign and God's justice (Mt 6:33), and exhort one another to better observe with greater dedication the rule they have professed and to follow faithfully in the footprints of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>128</sup> Let them neither dominate nor seek power especially over one another,<sup>129</sup> but let them willingly serve and obey one another with the charity which comes from the spirit (Gal 5:13). This is the true and holy obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup>

26. They are always to have one of their number as minister and servant of the fraternity<sup>131</sup> whom they are strictly obliged to obey in all that they have promised God to observe, and which is not contrary to conscience and this rule.<sup>132</sup>

27. Those who are ministers and servants of the others should visit, admonish and encourage them with humility and charity.<sup>133</sup> Should there be brothers or sisters anywhere who know and acknowledge that they cannot observe the Rule according to its spirit, it is their right and duty to have recourse to their ministers. The ministers are to receive them with charity and kindness, they should make them feel so comfortable that the brothers and sisters can speak and act towards them just as an employer would with a worker. This is how it should be because the ministers are to be servants of all.<sup>134</sup>

28. No one is to appropriate any office or ministry whatsoever; rather each should willingly relinquish it when the time comes.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> 2LtF 10.

<sup>127</sup> LR X, 2; FLCI X, 2.

<sup>128</sup> ER XVIII, 1; Test 34.

<sup>129</sup> ER V, 9.

<sup>130</sup> ER V, 9; 14-15.

<sup>131</sup> LR VIII, 1.

<sup>132</sup> LR X, 3; FLCI X, 2

<sup>133</sup> ER IV, 2; FLCI X, 1.

<sup>134</sup> LR X, 4-6; FLCI X, 3; TestCI 19.

<sup>135</sup> ER XVII, 4.

## IX APOSTOLIC LIFE

29. The brothers and sisters are to love God with their whole heart, their whole soul and mind and with all their strength, and to love their neighbour as themselves (Mt 22:39; Mk 12:30). Let them glorify God in all they do. Sent into the whole world by God, they should give witness by word and work to God's voice and make known to all that only God is all-powerful (Tb 13:4).<sup>136</sup>

30. As they announce peace with their lips, let them be careful to have it even more within their own hearts. No one should be roused to anger or insult on their account; rather, all should be moved to peace, kindness and harmony because of their gentleness.<sup>137</sup> The sisters and brothers are called to heal the wounded, to bind up those who are bruised, and to reclaim the erring. Wherever they are, they should recall that they have given themselves up completely and handed themselves over totally to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, they should be prepared to expose themselves to every enemy, visible and invisible, for love of the Lord because He says: Blessed are they who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, theirs is the reign of God (Mt 5:10).<sup>138</sup>

31. In the charity which God is (1Jn 4:16) all the brothers and sisters, whether they are praying or serving or working, should strive to be humble in everything. They should not, because of good words, works, and even anything good that God does, speaks and works in and through them, seek glory or rejoice or exult interiorly. Rather, in every place and circumstance, let them acknowledge that all good belongs to the most high Lord God and Ruler of all things.<sup>139</sup> Let them always give thanks to the one from Whom all good proceeds.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> 1LtF 1, 1; LtOrd 8-9.

<sup>137</sup> L3C XIV, 58.

<sup>138</sup> ER XVI, 10-12.

<sup>139</sup> ER XVII, 5-6.

<sup>140</sup> ER XVII, 17.

## EXHORTATION AND BLESSING

32. Let all the brothers and sisters be mindful above all things that they must desire to have the Spirit of God at work within them.<sup>141</sup> Always subject to the Holy Church and established in the Catholic faith, let them observe the poverty and humility and the holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ which they have firmly promised.<sup>142</sup>

Whoever will observe these things shall be filled with the blessings of the most high Father in heaven, and on earth with the blessing of the beloved Son, with the most Holy Spirit, the Paraclete and with all virtues of heaven and with all the saints.

And I, little Brother Francis, your servant, in so far as I am able, confirm to you within and without this most holy blessing.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> LR X, 8; FLCI X, 7.

<sup>142</sup> LR XII, 4; FLCI XII, 11.

<sup>143</sup> Test 40-41.

## **Appendix 2**

### **The Third Order Regular of St Francis in South Africa – 2012**

#### **Congregations of Sisters:**

Daughters of St Francis of Assisi  
Franciscan Clarist Congregation  
Franciscan Minoresses  
Franciscan Missionaries of Mary  
Franciscan Missionary Sisters for Africa  
Franciscan Nardini Sisters of the Holy Family  
Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady Mother of Africa  
Franciscan Sisters of Our Lady of Victories  
Franciscan Sisters of Siessen  
Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception  
Franciscan Sisters Servants of the Cross  
School Sisters of St Francis  
Servants of the Holy Child Jesus (Franciscans)  
Sisters of St Paul TOR  
Sisters of the Holy Cross  
Irmas Franciscanas Missionarias de Nossa Senhora  
(Franciscan Sisters of Mill Hill)  
(Sisters of St Joseph – Third Order of St Francis)

#### **Community of Brothers:**

Third Order Regular of St Francis

Source:

*The Catholic Directory*. 2011-2012. Pretoria: Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference.