

CONSTITUTIONS
SOCIETY OF FRANCISCANS OF LIFE



VITA AD VITAM VOCAT

CONSTITUTIONES
SOCIETAS FRATRUM FRANCISCANUM VITAE



VITA AD VITAM VOCAT

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Franciscans of the Renewal, the Friars Minor Capuchin, the Brothers Minor, the Third Order Regular (TOR Franciscans) and the many other Franciscans who made their constitutions available on the Internet or in a hard copy. Your work and example clearly reflects the spirit of our Seraphic Father. Your constitutions served as templates for our own. Without your willingness to share your constitutions with the Universal Church, the task of revising our constitutions would have been daunting.

Letter from the superior

My dearest brothers in the Immaculate and St. Francis:

I present to you the revised Constitutions of the Society of Franciscans of Life. After several months of research, writing, editing, consulting and prayer, we now have an edition of our constitutions that will help pave our way toward the future as we aspire toward eventual erection as a new form of consecrated life in the Catholic Church.

These constitutions are not the sole effort of one man. They are the effort of every brother. Some of you proofread them and made editing suggestions. Others read them, reflected on them and gave us feedback on their fidelity to the mind of St. Francis and the needs of the local Church.

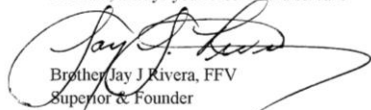
The first draft of these constitutions was written in 2012 and was submitted to our Benevolent Ordinary, Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski, who suggested that we create a separate section for the extern brothers so that the uniqueness of each vocation, extern and regular brother, would be more visible and more clearly explained. We hope to have achieved this.

After three-years of faithfully observing the constitutions we found that we needed to make the change suggested by the Archbishop and to reorganize the chapters and sections for easier reading. Nothing of the original constitutions has been lost or changed and nothing new has been added. We simply have expressed our Franciscan spirituality in language and format that is easier for today's man to follow and understand.

Let us be faithful sons of the Church and St. Francis by living according to what we have promised, to live the Gospel according to the Holy Rule and these constitutions. Let no one gloss over these constitutions and attempt to interpret them to mean something other than what has been said. And if any changes are to be made to these constitutions, let them be made with the consent of the brotherhood in a chapter and that of the local bishop, when necessary.

Finally, let us never forget that the letter of the law kills and the Spirit gives life. We should always look at these constitutions in search for the spirit of the Gospel, according to the tradition of the Catholic Church and the mind of St. Francis of Assisi. If we are faithful in small things, God will be merciful in times of great need.

I remain, always your brother and servant



Brother Jay J. Rivera, FFV
Superior & Founder

8 December 2015

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

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Part I: Rule and Testament of our holy father St. Francis

THE RULE OF PENANCE

As prescribed by St. Francis of Assisi in 1221

Here begins the Rule of the Continent Brothers and Sisters:

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

CHAP I: DAILY LIFE

1. The men belonging to this brotherhood shall dress in humble, undyed cloth, the price of which is not to exceed six Ravenna soldi an ell, unless for evident and necessary cause a temporary dispensation be given. And breadth and thinness of the cloth are to be considered in said price.

2. They shall wear their outer garments and furred coats without open throat, sewed shut or uncut but certainly laced up, not open as secular people wear them; and they shall wear their sleeves closed.

3. The sisters in turn shall wear an outer garment and tunic made of cloth of the same price and humble quality; or at least they are to have with the outer garment a white or black underwrap or petticoat, or an ample linen gown without gathers, the price of an ell of which is not to exceed twelve Pisa denars. As to this price, however, and the fur cloaks they wear a dispensation may be given according to the estate of the woman and the custom of the place. They are not to wear silken or dyed veils and ribbons.

4. And both the brothers and the sisters shall have their fur garments of lamb's wool only. They are permitted to have leather purses and belts sewed in simple fashion without silken thread, and no other kind. Also other vain adornments they shall lay aside at the bidding of the Visitor.

5. They are not to go to unseemly parties or to shows or dances. They shall not donate to actors, and shall forbid their household to donate.

CHAP II: ABSTINENCE

6. All are to abstain from meat save on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays, except on account of illness or weakness, for three days at blood-letting, in traveling, or on account of a specially high feast intervening, namely, the Nativity for three days, New Year's, Epiphany, the Pasch of the Resurrection for three days, Assumption of the glorious Virgin Mary, the solemnity of All Saints and of St. Martin. On the other days, when there is no fasting, they may eat cheese and eggs. But when they are with religious in their convent homes, they have leave to eat what is served to them. And except for the feeble, the ailing, and those travelling, let them be content with dinner and supper. Let the healthy be temperate in eating and drinking.

7. Before their dinner and supper let them say the Lord's prayer once, likewise after their meal, and let them give thanks to God. Otherwise let them say three Our Fathers.

CHAP III: FASTING

8. From the Pasch of the Resurrection to the feast of All Saints they are to fast on Fridays. From the feast of All

Saints until Easter they are to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, but still observing the other fasts enjoined in general by the Church.

9. They are to fast daily, except on account of infirmity or any other need, throughout the fast of St. Martin from after said day until Christmas, and throughout the greater fast from Carnival Sunday until Easter.

10. Sisters who are pregnant are free to refrain until their purification from the corporal observances except those regarding their dress and prayers.

11. Those engaged in fatiguing work shall be allowed to take food three times a day from the Pasch of the Resurrection until the Dedication feast of St. Michael. And when they work for others it will be allowed them to eat everything served to them, except on Fridays and on the fasts enjoined in general by the Church.

CHAP IV: PRAYER

12. All are daily to say the seven canonical Hours, that is: Matins, Prime, Terce, Sext, None, Vespers, and Compline. The clerics are to say them after the manner of

the clergy. Those who know the Psalter are to say the Deus in nomine tuo (Psalm 54) and the Beati Immaculati (Psalm 119) up to the Legem pone (Verse 33) for Prime, and the other psalms of the Hours, with the Glory Be to the Father; but when they do not attend church, they are to say for Matins the psalms the Church says or any eighteen psalms; or at least to say the Our Father as do the unlettered at any of the Hours. The others say twelve Our Fathers for Matins and for every one of the other Hours seven Our Fathers with the Glory Be to the Father after each one. And those who know the Creed and the Miserere mei Deus (Ps. 51) should say it at Prime and Compline. If they do not say that at the Hours indicated, they shall say three Our Fathers.

13. The sick are not to say the Hours unless they wish.

14. All are to go to Matins in the fast of St. Martin and in the great fast, unless inconvenience for persons or affairs should threaten.

CHAP V: THE SACRAMENTS, OTHER MATTERS

15. They are to make a confession of their sins three times a year and to receive Communion at Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost. They are to be reconciled with their

neighbors and to restore what belongs to others. They are to make up for past tithes and pay future tithes.

16. They are not to take up lethal weapons, or bear them about, against anybody.

17. All are to refrain from formal oaths unless where necessity compels, in the cases excepted by the Sovereign Pontiff in his indult, that is, for peace, for the Faith, under calumny, and in bearing witness.

18. Also in their ordinary conversations they will do their best to avoid oaths. And should anyone have sworn thoughtlessly through a slip of the tongue, as happens where there is much talking, he should the evening of the same day, when he is obliged to think over what he has done, say three Our Fathers in amends of such oaths. Let each member fortify his household to serve God.

CHAP VI: SPECIAL MASS AND MEETING EACH MONTH

19. All the brothers and sisters of every city and place are to foregather every month at the time the ministers see fit,

in a church which the ministers will make known, and there assist at Divine Services.

20. And every member is to give the treasurer one ordinary denar. The treasurer is to collect this money and distribute it on the advice of the ministers among the poor brothers and sisters, especially the sick and those who may have nothing for their funeral services, and thereupon among the poor; and they are to offer something of the money to the aforesaid church.

21. And, if it be convenient at the time, they are to have some religious who is informed in the words of God to exhort them and strengthen them to persevere in their penance and in performing the works of mercy. And except for the officers, they are to remain quiet during the Mass and sermon, intent on the Office, on prayer, and on the sermon.

CHAP VII: VISITING THE SICK, BURYING THE DEAD

22. Whenever any brother or sister happens to fall ill, the ministers, if the patient let them know of it, shall in person or through others visit the patient once a week, and remind him of penance; and if they find it expedient, they

are to supply him from the common fund with what he may need for the body.

23. And if the ailing person depart from this life, it is to be published to the brothers and sisters who may be present in the city or place, so that they may gather for the funeral; and they are not to leave until the Mass has been celebrated and the body consigned to burial. Thereupon each member within eight days of the demise shall say for the soul of the deceased: a Mass, if he is a priest; fifty psalms, if he understands the Psalter, or if not, then fifty Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.

24. In addition, every year, for the welfare of the brothers and sisters living and dead, each priest is to say three Masses, each member knowing the Psalter is to recite it, and the rest shall say one hundred Our Fathers with the Requiem aeternam at the end of each.

25. All who have the right are to make their last will and make disposition of their goods within three months after their profession, lest anyone of them die intestate.

26. As regards making peace among the brothers and sisters or non-members at odds, let what the ministers find proper be done; even, if it be expedient, upon consultation with the Lord Bishop.

27. If contrary to their right and privileges trouble is made for the brothers and sisters by the mayors and governors of the places where they live, the ministers of the place shall do what they shall find expedient on the advice of the Lord Bishop.

28. Let each member accept and faithfully exercise the ministry of other offices imposed on him, although anyone may retire from office after a year.

29. When anybody wishes to enter this brotherhood, the ministers shall carefully inquire into his standing and occupation, and they shall explain to him the obligations of the brotherhood, especially that of restoring what belongs to others. And if he is content with it, let him be vested according to the prescribed way, and he must make satisfaction for his debts, paying money according to what pledged provision is given. They are to reconcile themselves with their neighbors and to pay up their tithes.

30. After these particulars are complied with, when the year is up and he seems suitable to them, let him on the advice of some discreet brothers be received on this condition: that he promise he will all the time of his life observe everything here written, or to be written or abated on the advice of the brothers, unless on occasion there be a valid dispensation by the ministers; and that he will, when called upon by the ministers, render satisfaction as the Visitor shall ordain if he have done anything contrary to this condition. And this promise is to be put in writing then and there by a public notary. Even so nobody is to be received otherwise, unless in consideration of the estate and rank of the person it shall seem advisable to the ministers.

31. No one is to depart from this brotherhood and from what is contained herein, except to enter a religious Order.

32. No heretic or person in bad repute for heresy is to be received. If he is under suspicion of it, he may be admitted if otherwise fit, upon being cleared before the bishop.

33. Married women are not to be received except with the consent and leave of their husbands.

34. Brothers and sisters ejected from the brotherhood as incorrigible are not to be received in it again except it please the saner portion of the brothers.

CHAPTER VIII: CORRECTION, DISPENSATION, OFFICERS

35. The ministers of any city or place shall report public faults of the brothers and sisters to the Visitor for punishment. And if anyone proves incorrigible, after consultation with some of the discreet brothers he should be denounced to the Visitor, to be expelled by him from the brotherhood, and thereupon it should be published in the meeting. Moreover, if it is a brother, he should be denounced to the mayor or the governor.

36. If anyone learns that a scandal is occurring relative to brothers and sisters, he shall report it to the ministers and shall have opportunity to report it to the Visitor. He need not be held to report it in the case of husband against wife.

37. The Visitor has the power to dispense all the brothers and sisters in any of these points if he finds it advisable.

38. When the year has passed, the ministers with the counsel of the brothers are to elect two other ministers; and a faithful treasurer, who is to provide for the need of the brothers and sisters and other poor; and messengers who at the command of the ministers are to publish what is said and done by the fraternity.

39. In all the above mentioned points no one is to be obligated under guilt, but under penalty; yet so that if after being admonished twice by the ministers he should fail to discharge the penalty imposed or to be imposed on him by the Visitor, he shall be obligated under guilt as contumacious.

HERE ENDS THE RULE OF THE CONTINENT.

Author: Cardinal Hugolino dei Conti di Segni (Pope Gregory IX) who wrote this Rule at the request of St. Francis of Assisi, 1221. Source: Franciscan Omnibus of Sources

TESTAMENT
OF
OUR HOLY FATHER FRANCIS

The Lord granted me, Brother Francis, to begin to do penance in this way: While I was in sin, it seemed very bitter to me to see lepers. And the Lord Himself led me among them and I had mercy upon them. And when I left them that which seemed bitter to me was changed into sweetness of soul and body; and afterward I lingered a little and left the world.

And the Lord gave me such faith in churches that I would simply pray and speak in this way: "We adore You, Lord Jesus Christ, in all Your churches throughout the world, and we bless You, for through Your holy cross You have redeemed the world."

Afterward the Lord gave me and still gives me such faith in priests who live according to the manner of the holy Roman Church because of their order, that if they were to persecute me, I would still have recourse to them. And if I possessed as much wisdom as Solomon had and I came upon pitiful priests of this world, I would not preach contrary to thier will in the parishes in which they live.

And I desire to fear, love, and honor them and all others as my masters. And I do not wish to consider sin in them because I discern the Son of God in them and they are my

masters. And I act in this way since I see nothing corporally of the Most High Son of God in this world except His Most holy Body and Blood which they receive and which they alone administer to others. And these most holy mysteries I wish to have honored above all things and to be revered and to have them reserved in precious places. Wherever I come upon His most holy written words in unbecoming places, I desire to gather them up and I ask that they be collected and placed in a suitable place. And we should honor and respect all theologians and those who minister the most holy divine words as those who minister spirit and life to us.

And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I should do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the form of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and in a few words and the Lord Pope confirmed it for me. And those who came to receive life gave to the poor everything which they were capable of possessing and they were content with one tunic, patched inside and out, with a cord and short trousers. And we had no desire for anything more. We who were clerics used to say the Office as other clerics did; the lay brothers said the Our Father; and we quite willingly stayed in churches. And we were simple and subject to all.

And I used to work with my hands, and I still desire to work; and I firmly wish that all my brothers give themselves to honest work. Let those who do not know how to work learn, not from desire of receiving wages for their work but as an example and in order to avoid idleness. And when we are not paid for our work, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, seeking alms from door to door. The Lord revealed to me a greeting, as we used to say: "May the Lord give you peace."

Let the brothers beware that they by no means receive churches or poor dwellings or anything which is built for them, unless it is in harmony with that holy poverty which we have promised in the Rule, and let them always be guests there as pilgrims and strangers. And I firmly command all of the brothers through obedience that, wherever they are, they should not be so bold as to seek any letter from the Roman Curia either personally or through an intermediary, neither for a church or for some other place or under the guise of preaching or even for the persecution of their bodies; but wherever they have not been received, let them flee into another country to do penance with the blessing of God.

And I firmly wish to obey the minister general of this fraternity and another guardian whom it might please him to give me. And I wish to be so captive in his hands that I cannot go anywhere or do anything beyond obedience and

his will, for he is my master. And although I may be simple and infirm, I wish nonetheless always to have a cleric who will celebrate the Office for me as it is contained in the Rule. And all the other brothers are bound to obey their guardians and to celebrate the Office according to the Rule. And if any are found who do not celebrate the Office according to the Rule and who wish to alter it in any way or who are not Catholics, let all the brothers be obliged through obedience that wherever they come upon such a brother they must bring him to the custodian nearest to that place where they have found him. And the custodian is strictly bound through obedience to guard him strongly as a prisoner day and night, so that he cannot be snatched from his hands until he can personally deliver him into the hands of his minister. And the minister is strictly bound through obedience to send him with brothers who shall guard him as a prisoner day and night until they deliver him before the Lord of Ostia who is the master, protector, and corrector of the entire fraternity.

And let the brothers not say: This is another Rule; because this is a remembrance, an admonition, an exhortation, and my testament, which I, little Brother Francis, prepare for all of you, my blessed brothers, so that we may observe in a more Catholic manner the Rule which we have promised to the Lord.

And the minister general and all other ministers and custodians are bound through obedience not to add to or subtract from these words. And let them always have this writing with them along with the Rule. And in all the chapters which they hold, when they read the Rule, let them also read these words. And I through obedience strictly command all my brothers, cleric and lay, not to place glosses on the Rule or on these words, saying: They are to be understood in this way. But as the Lord has granted me to speak and to write the Rule and these words simply and purely, so shall you understand them simply and without gloss, and observe them with their holy manner of working until the end.

And whoever shall have observed these things, may he be filled in heaven with the blessing of the most high Father and on earth with the blessing of His beloved Son with the most Holy Spirit the Paraclete and with all the powers of heaven and all the saints. And I, little brother Francis, your servant, inasmuch as I can, confirm for you this most holy blessing both within and without.

CONSTITUTION AND STATUTES:
SOCIETY OF THE FRANCISCAN BROTHERS OF
LIFE

PART II Who we are

Chap 1: Identity

1. The Franciscans of Life are Catholic laymen consecrated to living the Gospel according to the Rule of 1221 of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance and our Constitutions. We strive to live the Gospel in an intense life of prayer, penance, and poverty. We freely exercise our ministry to the voiceless, paying special attention to the preborn child and his family, the chronically and terminally ill and their families and caregivers, and the immigrant poor. FFV is the abbreviation for the Society's name in Latin, "Fratres Franciscani Vitae". The motto of the society is "Vita ad Vitam Vocat", that is, "Life calls out to life".
2. We look to the Trinity for guidance and example in community, intimacy, love, unity and holiness. Entrusted to the Immaculate, under the example of our patrons and in faithful obedience to the successor of

Peter and the local bishop, the brothers learn to live under the mantle of the "Virgin made Church" and to uphold the sanctity of life from conception to natural death.

3. Our community is born in the territory of the Archdiocese of Miami (Miami-Dade, Broward, and Monroe Counties). Founded in 2009 by a professed Franciscan, the FFV is an autonomous outgrowth of the Franciscan family to be comprised of regular and extern brothers who form one family as did the first generation Franciscans. Whether regular or extern, every brother is a man of prayer. Liturgical and individual prayer is the highest priority in our lives. The Eucharist is the summit of our life of prayer. Through the recitation of the Divine Office, we continue to live the Eucharist throughout the day by sanctifying the different hours, as did Israel, Christ and the Apostles and as the Church does today.
4. The term "regular" identifies brothers of common life who are celibate, profess vows, and live in community. The term "extern" identifies brothers who

are husbands, fathers, or single men wishing to marry. The difference between them is in their way of life.

Our Brothers

5. The regular brothers live in community, under the guidance of a superior known as guardian. They make vows of obedience, poverty and chastity.
6. None of the regular brothers owns anything individually or in common. They rent their home, share their material resources, and work to provide for their material needs as prescribed by Saint Francis in his Testament. When the income is not enough, the brothers beg as did the early Franciscans. The daily life of these brothers is comprised of prayer, work, ministry, study, recreation and rest, striving to live the present moment as a family where brother serves brother.

The extern brothers live in the secular world, but are not of the world. They are husbands, fathers, and single men wishing to marry. They come together with each other and the regular brothers at the weekly

family meeting, liturgical functions, prayer, and apostolic activities.

Chap 2: Our place in the Church

7. Our way of life, deeply rooted in the example and teaching of Christ the Lord, is a gift of God the Father through the Holy Spirit which calls us to walk in the footsteps of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe.
8. As individuals we dedicate ourselves to God by a special consecration in our innermost hearts. Our choice of total self-giving to God in Christ is in no way incompatible with any human culture or historical situation. Thus, we look back to the origins of the Franciscan tradition and learn. It is this hermeneutic of continuity that enables us to walk forward confident that we are on the path marked by Francis and Maximilian – a path that leads us to the Kingdom of God, which begins in the heart of the Church. We hope to become a gift for the present and future of the People of God; but how to achieve this goal?

9. We propose to do whatever is in our power to work with the Church to proclaim The Gospel of Life and to protect the inalienable right to life of every human being. The brothers will work with and support every diocesan and ecclesial effort in defense of human life, each according to his means and the gifts that God has given him. Every brother will work to educate men and women on the dignity and inviolability of life and to provide for them the necessary material, psychological, social and spiritual support to bring Christ to the unwanted and to find Christ behind the distressing disguise of those who are unloved.
10. God calls us to be simple men like St. Francis. He calls us to serve him in his Church, living the Gospel as brothers to each other and to the world, serving families, faithful to the way of perfection that Francis outlines in the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, always under the guidance and authority of the local bishop.
11. Recognizing that we are simple men, we do not aspire to do great things, but to be faithful in the small things

that God has called us to do. Like Francis, we obey the Holy Father, the Diocesan Bishop, and the superior of the Fraternity. We offer our free service to the voiceless, especially the preborn, the sick, the dying, the immigrant poor to whom we proclaim the Kingdom of God through our thoughts words and actions.

12. There is to be fostered an ordered cooperation and a coordination under the direction of the diocesan bishop of all the works and apostolic activities, without prejudice to the character and purpose of the Franciscans of Life and our constitutions.
13. No brother is ever to speak ill of the Church or the hierarchy. If there are legitimate concerns that must be heard, let the brother present them to the proper ecclesial authority, not promulgate his concerns in the public square.
14. The brothers are to obey the Church, never contradict her teachings and cast doubt on the Magisterium. Such temptations are to be avoided through prayer to

the Immaculate Mother of the Church and our holy father Saint Francis.

15. A brother who attacks the Church must atone for his failing under the direction of his superior, spiritual director or confessor.

a. The superior must correct such destructive behavior twice, in private with the offending brother. If the brother does not retract, the superior must send him a written letter of correction. Should the brother insist in his defiant behavior, the next course is to consult the local bishop to determine if there is just cause for dismissal.

b. Through this process, let the superior treat the brother with the firmness of a father and the patience of a mother. None of us is without sin and faults.

16. Our vocation to serve the Church, in the Church and with the Church is a gift of the Spirit in order to bear fruit for the Lord in the growth of fraternity and

service. We choose Christ, daily, by radically following the Gospel and by serving our brothers and sisters, especially the voiceless. Such service is itself a sign of the organic unity of the commandment of love, in the inseparable link between love of God and love of neighbor.

Chap 3: Serving the Gospel

17. The brothers shall pay special attention to fathers.

Through education programs and individual contacts, we hope to teach fathers that their children are children of God and to model for them respect for every human being, regardless of his developmental stage. Through our obedience, we model obedience to the will of the Father in heaven, and lead fathers to welcome their children into the world and educate them to fulfill God's law. Whenever these programs and services are available through the diocese or the local parish, the brothers shall support them and cooperate with them. If they are needed, but are unavailable, the brothers will attempt to create them with the permission of the Diocesan Bishop or his delegate.

18. We do not ask the local diocese for funds to finance our service to the poor. We welcome all material assistance that God provides freely through the Church and other sources. However, if such funds are unavailable, we are willing to beg for support, always with the permission of the bishop. As Francis said,

a. And we were simple and subject to all. And I worked with my hands and I wish to work and I wish firmly that all the other brothers should work at some labor which is compatible with honesty. Let those who know not [how to work] learn, not through desire to receive the price of labor but for the sake of example and to repel idleness. And when the price of labor is not given to us, let us have recourse to the table of the Lord, begging alms from door to door, (Testament of the Holy Father St. Francis).

19. The sick and the elderly have a special place in our way of life. In our current culture of death considers those who have reached a certain age or whose health renders them incapable of productivity a burden that is

disposable. However, the incarnation and the cross reveal to us God's love for humanity. The sick and the elderly were of special concern to Jesus. They held a special place in his heart. Throughout history, we see God blessing the elderly as he blessed Abraham and Sarah with the birth of Isaac. He also blessed Zechariah and Elizabeth with the birth of John the Baptist. Through the elderly, God brought his chosen people into existence and raised up the greatest prophet in history.

20. We are not blind to this activity on the part of God. We recognize in the elderly, God's providential love and their special place in the plan of salvation. Through presence and outreach to the elderly and their families, we hope, with the grace of God and the blessing of the Church, to point to the dignity in the elderly, by loving them as God loves them and by protecting them as God protects them. This will require education and consciousness raising. It is not an easy task or a task for everyone. Each brother will support it with his talents. The fraternity will support the brother engaged with the elderly by offering material assistance and prayer. For every hand that

touches the life of one of God's poor, there must always be hearts and voices supporting that hand with prayer and material assistance. No hand is ever detached from the body. Otherwise, it's not a living hand. Each brother is a hand connected to the Body of Christ. We realize that our work is but a drop in the ocean. However, without that drop, the ocean would be shallower.

21. The fraternity must bring Christ's compassion to the sick, especially those whose lives are threatened by the culture of death. We believe that death with true dignity occurs when man dies at the time and in the manner determined by Providence, not by man. To accelerate death in the name of dignity is a distortion of the meaning of dignity. It takes away from man what God has given him, the capacity to share in redemptive love. The brothers must reach out to the sick and those who care for them. They must bring Christ's redemptive love to the bedside of the sick. They should also educate family members and healthcare workers through their example and when necessary their words. They must remind the world that Jesus has the power to heal, forgive sins and that

he lives in the sick. “I was sick and you looked after me,” (Mt. 35:36). His preferential love for the sick has not ceased. We want to draw people’s attention to those who suffer in body and soul. Our effort to comfort the sick and to bring home those who are away from the Church must be unceasing.

22. To help families and healthcare providers choose life, the brothers will work for the creation of education programs on end of life issues that proclaim the moral law and teach that the sick and elderly are not a problem to be solved, but brothers and sisters to be loved.

23. We offer to serve the immigrant poor, regardless of his or her status. We must distinguish between the duties of the civil state and the duties of the Christian conscience. While we encourage men and women of conscience to find a moral answers to the urgent questions surrounding immigration, our mission goes beyond the temporal and political. When Saint Francis encountered the leper on the road, he did not ask him how he got there or how he caught leprosy. He embraced him and shared what he had.

24. When the crowd realized that they could not get the paralytic to Jesus using ordinary means, they cut an opening into the roof and lowered him into the presence of Christ, an unconventional way of entering a house. However, Jesus did not ask him how he got there or why they had violated the roof. Instead, Jesus ministered to his spiritual and physical needs. He forgave his sins and healed his disability. Like Jesus, we must render unto Caesar what is his and unto God what is God's. "O man, what is good and what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God," (Mi 6:8)

25. Like St. Francis, we want to be disciples by imitating the Master. The Master never turned people away. Instead, he turned their lives around. We must point the immigrant poor to the Church and the sacraments. If we cannot alleviate their poverty, we can alleviate their loneliness and their fear. Saint Francis knew what it was to be a foreigner. He was a soldier and later a missionary. However, the word stranger was never in his vocabulary. Whether a man is a neighbor or a foreigner, he's always our brother, never a

stranger. We pray and hope to bring life into the existence of the immigrant poor who feels that he is a stranger, welcoming and serving him as we would any other member of our family. Jesus comes to us disguised as an immigrant in search of a new life. *“I was a stranger and you invited me in,” (Mt. 25:35).*

26. We bear witness to God’s reign in our lives essentially through the witness of our words and deeds. Through our commitment to prayer and contemplation, the study of Sacred Scripture, our fidelity to the Church and the Sacraments, our fraternal life, and a generous service to others, especially the voiceless.
27. Every member of the community is to be personally and directly involved in “hands-on” work with the voiceless. All service to the poor is given completely free of charge.
28. Our mission of evangelization in the Church is through preaching and teaching the Holy Gospel, and by sharing the rich treasures of our Catholic faith with all. Some expressions of this apostolate are: providing missionary centers for the poor, street

evangelization, pro-life education, retreats, and days of recollection, pilgrimages, spiritual direction, pastoral counseling, and religious education, all with a focus on the sanctity of life.

29. In order to insure that the demands of our apostolic works do not extinguish the spirit of holy prayer and devotion (cf. Rule of St. Francis, Ch. V), the brothers will periodically evaluate their commitments.

30. Faithful to our charism, the community may never administer a parish, a school or a healthcare facility. United in the spirit of St. Francis, we may offer generous service and humbly assist when asked to do so.

PART III Our Spirituality

Chap 4: Our relationship with the Immaculate

31. The Franciscan family reserves a special place for our Blessed Mother under the title of The Immaculate. She is the patron and protector of the Seraphic Family. St. Francis sang her praises and encouraged his sons and daughters to do the same. The brothers consecrate our lives to the Immaculate under the formula prescribed by St. Maximilian Kolbe. We renew the consecration annually on December 8, Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception.

32. Mary is the Mother of God, Mother of the Church, and Mother of the Franciscan family. As such, she is venerated and loved. She is also the protector and patron of the unborn. In our daily prayer, we commend to her care the unborn child and his parents.

33. She is the Queen of Charity as evidenced in the visitation to Elizabeth. Therefore, we commend to her care the elderly and the sick and we encourage them

to place themselves in the hands of the Immaculate who loves with without reservation and who never ceases interceding for us. Like our brother, St. Maximilian Kolbe, let us make the name of the Immaculate known to the voiceless and assure them that in her they have an advocate and a voice before the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us ask her to intercede on behalf of those who cannot intercede for themselves.

34. The rosary should hold a special place in our life of prayer. Through Holy Rosary we can say with Mary, *“My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord and rejoices in God my Savior,”* (Lk 1:46-47) as we meditate on the work of the Most Holy Trinity in human history.

Chap 5: Life in fraternity

35. Communal life thus expresses a help that Christ provides for our life, calling us, through the presence of brothers, to an ever more profound conformity to his person. Living in relationship with others means accepting the need of my own continual conversion and above all discovering the beauty of such a

journey, the joy of humility, of penance, but also of conversation, of mutual forgiveness, of mutual support striving to give an example of virtue to one another and to everyone, and doing violence to our own passions and evil inclinations.

36. As brothers given to each other by the Lord and endowed with different gifts, let us accept one another with a grateful spirit. For this reason, wherever we may be gathered together in the name of Jesus, let us be of one heart and one mind, always striving to advance to greater perfection.

37. The brothers living in the house should cultivate a true family spirit among themselves cooperating in the works of the apostolate and sharing in the duties that pertain to the common life.

38. The fraternity is a lay community. However, clerics may be admitted to the fraternity with the consent of their ordinary. There number of clerics may never exceed ten percent, to preserve the lay character of the community. Those brothers who are clerics have the same rights and duties as any other

brother. They minister to their brothers when they celebrate the sacraments for the community. The clerics shall not work in parishes, be school administrators, hospital or military chaplains, nor shall they seek special offices and positions in the Church. Like the first Franciscans, they shall endeavor to serve in the apostolate of the community serving the voiceless. Brother-clerics shall wear the same habit and dress clothing as the lay brothers.

39. By reason of the same vocation the brothers are equal.

For this reason, according to the Rule, Testament and earliest custom of the Capuchins, let all of us be called brothers without distinction.

40. The precedence necessary for the service of the fraternity flows from the responsibilities and roles actually exercised. Everyone should help the another according to the gifts he has received, even in daily household chores

41. To preserve the spirit of the cloister, fraternal life, and custody of the senses, the brothers shall go through the streets in pairs as often as possible. When a

brother must travel alone, let him remember that he is not a solitary agent. He is a member of a larger body that loves him and whom he loves.

42. Let us take care that, in our fraternities, differences of age contribute to a harmony of spirit and a mutual enrichment. Signs of loving care and gratitude should be shown to the brothers of advanced age. Let the young brothers show proper esteem for the older ones and willingly profit from their experience. Let the older brothers, however, try new and sound forms of life and activity and let both, [young and old], share their unique treasures with one other.

43. Therefore, each one should strive to take care of a sick brother, visit him willingly and comfort him fraternally. Let the superior frequently and fraternally visit the sick brother and not neglect to provide for his soul, either personally or by means of another, and, if he knows that he is seriously ill, to inform him of the gravity of his situation with prudence and prepare him for the sacraments. The sick brothers should remember our position as lesser brothers.

44. The fraternity itself by means of a common reflection under the direction of the superior should supervise the use of social means of communication so that poverty, prayer, fraternal life, work and moral life are protected and enhanced. Let them use these media with moderation and mature discrimination; those that are dangerous to faith, morals and consecrated life must be avoided.
45. Before leaving the house, the brothers should ask permission of the superior according to custom. As for undertaking journeys, let each brother, before asking permission, conscientiously weigh the reasons in light of our state of poverty, spiritual and fraternal life, and the witness given to people. Superiors should use prudence in giving permission for traveling.
46. Let us live, therefore, in a brotherly communion of the same spirit and willingly promote through mutual cooperation the study and common initiatives of Franciscan life and activity.

Chap 6: Our life of penance

47. The Rule of 1221 is the foundation *Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance*. Holy and ancient, its tenets were the basis of many medieval penitential groups and the life-path of many saints and blessed within the Church. It stands forever as a call to follow the path of the Lord and His saints. Its lifestyle is timeless and holy, completely authentic in its call to personal conversion.

48. The Rule embraces the Gospel and, when lived, draws one towards union with God, the hope of all Christians and the state of the blessed in heaven. Indeed, there are "*...stages of prayer which no one ever teaches...*", and they are only reached here on earth by a committed, prayerful, and penitential life that strives for the perfection of charity, a secret the saints knew only too well.

49. Living this Rule transforms us in, with, and for, the Love of God so that we, in humble ways, begin to transform our world by serving as the voice of the voiceless and offering penance for those who do

not do penance. A penitential life resounds a constant invitation to prayer and self-mastery called for in Scripture (Rom. 12:12). Increasingly indifferent to worldly things, the penitent begins to live in a spirit of poverty, simplicity, humility and purity. Prayer, fasting, abstinence, temperance, and a solid, family-based Christian response to others drive all of our daily activities in the home, fraternity and the world.

50. Every brother must make an effort to conquer his faults and grow in the opposing virtue. He must often struggle against his inner self. There may be a human tendency to practice virtue and avoid faults out of habit rather than desire. Such practice has little merit. With the help of the Immaculate, we struggle to overcome our faults and grow in virtue out of love for Him who loved us first.

51. The Fraternity and all who enter into this life of penance are consecrated to Jesus through the heart of Mary, His Mother and our advocate. May we always grow closer to Christ through the intercession and guidance of the Immaculate.

52. Penance is a special characteristic of our Holy Father Francis and the legacy that left to his sons and daughters. Unlike other penitents of his time, Francis embraced penance in a very positive way. Penance is an act of love of God and neighbor, not a way of setting oneself apart from others or a subtle way of indicting others. We embrace penance out of love and with joy. As the Apostle Paul says, *“that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead,”* (Phil 3:10-11). *“Penance requires. . . the sinner to endure all things willingly, be contrite of heart, confess with the lips, and practice complete humility and fruitful satisfaction”* (CCC 1450).

53. The brothers shall practice outward and inward acts of penance, for their benefit and for those who do not do penance. All forms of fasting and abstinence are to be practiced discretely so as not to call unnecessary attention to self and as not to make others feel uncomfortable.

54. Brothers must eat what is placed before them, even on a day of fast and abstinence, offering up the sacrifice in place of the fast and abstinence. Penance without charity is not penance. We are never to turn away from a meal presented in charity for the sake of fasting and abstinence. In that case, let the brother eat discretely, with gratitude toward his benefactor.

55. That being said, the brothers shall dispense with the fast for family celebrations, remembering the Lord himself dispensed with the dietary laws and other prescriptions for the sake of love, (Lk 6:1-3).

a. Abstinence:

1. Wednesdays and Fridays through the year are to be days of abstinence.

b. Fasting:

1. Fridays are to be days of fasting. The brothers shall follow the guidelines established by the Latin Church.
2. October 3rd, in which we commemorate the passing of our Holy Father St. Francis,

shall be a day of fasting and abstinence,
unless it falls on a Sunday.

3. The brothers shall also observe the
abstinence and fast on the days prescribed
by the calendar of the Latin Church.

56. *The three Lents* are times of fasting and abstinence on
Wednesdays and Fridays.

- a. The Great Lent that ends with Easter
- b. The “Little Lent” from the Feast of St. Michael to
the Feast of St Martin
- c. Advent

57. Fasting and abstinence are dispensed on all
solemnities of the Latin Church, as well as

- a. from December 25 to January 6,
- b. from Easter Sunday to Divine Mercy Sunday,

58. And on the Franciscan feasts and solemnities:

- a. Feast of St. Bonaventure (July 15),
- b. Our Lady of the Angels of Portiuncula (August 2),

- c. Solemnity of our Holy Father Dominic (August 8),
- d. Solemnity of our Holy Mother Clare (August 11),
- e. Feast of our patron St. Maximilian Kolbe (August 14),
- f. Feast of the Stigmata of our Holy Father Francis (September 17),
- g. And Solemnity of our Holy Father Francis (October 4).

59. Those brothers who are in poor health are dispensed from the fast and abstinence until their physician says that they may engage in such practices. Instead, let them joyfully unite their physical sufferings to those of Christ as an act of Redemptive Love and their special way of penance. Let no brother judge them or question them. Only the superior general may indulge in such questions. The other brothers are to support them by caring for them in their infirmities and being present to them in response to their needs.

60. We shall offer a daily act of penance during the seasons of Advent and Lent to prepare ourselves for the great solemnities of the Nativity and the Pasch of the Lord and we shall offer these acts for those who do not do penance,

but in a very special way for those who ignore and violate the sanctity of life. These statutes highly encourage each brother to discern an appropriate penance with the guidance of his confessor or spiritual director.

61. Let us remember that every act of penance is to be united to the suffering of Crucified Christ who came that we may have life. Every act of penance is a drop in the bucket of life. When possible, whatever money we may save from our fasts and abstinence should be set aside for the benefit of the poor. The only way to turn the world away from the Culture of Death to the Culture of Life is through prayer and fasting.

62. Sleep:

- a. The regular brothers will follow the horarium of the local house.
- b. They are not to sleep more than seven hours per day, unless they are ill or over the age of 65, in which case they should sleep as much as they need in order to maintain their strength.

c. Sleep may be divided into two parts to accommodate the hour of Matins. This decision is made by the house chapter.

i. Sick and elderly brothers are not to interrupt their sleep to pray Matins. Let them pray the hour of Matins at a time that is convenient to them, if they are strong enough to pray the Liturgy of the Hours.

63. At the beginning of the novitiate the regular brother receives a notebook into which he must write his *culpa* every other day beginning on Sundays. The brother examines his conscience and records his culpa. These are faults of omission and commission against the rule, the constitution, love of neighbor, in the apostolate, and which are not reserved for the confessor's ears.

64. On Fridays, during the penitential rite at Compline, we hold the *Chapter of Faults* where each brother proclaims his faults before his brothers and asks for their prayers in charity. Again, that which is reserved for the confessional or strictly for the knowledge of the superior is never shared during the Chapter.

- a. The superior may assign a penance to be done in private, in the refectory or the oratory.
- b. Superiors must remember that they are not masters. They are guardians. It is the moral duty of the superior to guard the faith above all things and to guard the souls of his brothers by leading them, not as one who commands, but as one who points the way as did John the Baptist.

65. If in the prudential judgement of the superior and after the brother has consulted with his confessor and spiritual director the brother is mature enough to use the discipline, he may participate in this rite, which is performed in common on Friday nights as the brothers pray the *De Profundis*.

- a. The application of the discipline to the body is a symbol of Christ's sufferings for the culture of death. It should draw us into His passion freely born out of love for sinners, not as a form of self-punishment or self-mutilation.
- b. It is only a symbol. No harm must come to the body. On the other hand, if the discipline is taken

lightly, it loses its effect. Both extremes present a just cause for stopping to discern if this is an appropriate penitential act for the brother in question.

c. It should help us meditate on our sinfulness and the mercy of God who freely chose to suffer for our redemption.

Chap 7: Our liturgical life and life of prayer

66. Without prayer, our apostolic life becomes humanitarian social work. Conscious that the Christian life is lived in and through Christ in communion with the Church; our Holy Father Francis commanded his brothers and sisters to unite themselves to the life of prayer of the Church in the Holy Mass and the Divine Office.

67. Respectful silence is to be kept from the end of Night Prayer until breakfast.

68. During the day, the house should be a quiet haven for prayer, study, rest and retreat.

69. Every day the community will devote periods for meditation, contemplation and sacred reading. In the morning this will be done in private; in the evening this is done in common.

70. Therefore, the brothers are to pray always. We are to unite our prayers to those of Christ and the Church first and foremost through the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Each brother shall attend daily mass and receive the Holy Eucharist. He shall avail himself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a month to safeguard his soul.

71. If a house has a proper chapel, with the approval of the local bishop, the brothers must make sure that everything is impeccably clean. Every item used for worship, such as sacred vessels, is to be constructed of the proper material required by the rubrics, and unadorned with jewels or stones.

a.If a visiting priest brings his own sacred vessels, they are to be handled with great reverence.

72. The brothers are to celebrate the Liturgy of the Hours, which is an extension of the Eucharist.

- a. They shall pray Lauds, Sext, Vespers, Compline and Matins. Each hour gives glory and praise to God keeping holy the cycle of an entire day.
- b. The Liturgy of the Hours is to be prayed in the community oratory, which is to be small and simply adorned.
 - i. Everything in the oratory must be kept immaculately clean and taken care of with great reverence.
 - ii. There should be a San Damiano cross, an icon or statue of the Immaculate, a copy of the Sacred Scriptures prominently displayed, two candles to be used during prayer and white linens.

73. When it becomes impossible for the brothers to pray the Divine Office, they should recur to the *Office of the Paters* praying seven Our Fathers and seven Glory Be . . . for Lauds, Vespers and Compline and 12 for Matins.

74. The brothers shall follow the Roman-Franciscan Liturgical Calendar making use of the Roman-Franciscan Breviary and missal.
75. They shall all pray from a common edition of the Breviary to ensure the unity of the fraternity. Until further notice, the brothers shall use the 1970 edition of Liturgy of the Hours approved by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (1971) and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops with the proper offices of the Franciscan saints and blessed approved by Franciscan Liturgical Commission and by the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship (1973).
76. The brothers are to attend mass together and in the Ordinary Form. With the permission of the superior, they may attend and celebrate mass in the Extraordinary Form or invite a priest to celebrate it for them, as long as the harmony of the house is not affected. However, the extraordinary should never become the ordinary.

77. If the Extraordinary Form is to be attended or used, let it be on a day when there is not a conflict with the two calendars so as to avoid missing a feast that is part of our Franciscan patrimony.

- a. Following two liturgical calendars is prohibited, because it creates confusion. In addition, the calendar for the 1962 missal does not include our recently canonized saints, which are important to our community and identity, such as St. Maximilian Kolbe and St. John Paul II.

78. St. Francis reminds us that we see nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ except the sacred species consecrated by the priest. Keeping his promise, *“Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world,”* (Mt. 28:20).

79. We too must remain with him until our earthly journey is over and lead others to do the same. The brothers shall make time to keep watch with Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament, saying like the psalmist, *“O LORD, I love the habitation of Your house And the place where Your glory dwells,”* (Ps 26:8).

80. We must make it our special mission to bring before the Blessed Sacrament our prayers for the voiceless whom God has called us to serve. Without his help, we are nothing, but with his help, we can conquer all things. Let us make a special effort to devote time before the Blessed Sacrament for the unborn and their families, the sick and the dying, the elderly, those who do not understand the dignity of life and those who have sinned against life. Our apostolate is not our work, but the work of Christ. Therefore, we must meet him in silence and unite our wills to his will.

81. Thursday evenings, the brothers are to spend time together before the Blessed Sacrament.

82. Every month, the regular brothers will take at least one day of solitude for personal prayer, communal prayer and formation from the superior. These are called *Days of Prayer*. They take precedence over any act of the apostolate or other activity and event outside of the fraternity.

83. Twice a year, the brothers will take an extended time for a retreat in accord with the *Modus Procedendi*, one with the community and one individually. The community retreat shall last for at least five days. The individual retreat shall last at least two nights. It is the responsibility of the superior to facilitate the community retreat. During the retreat the brothers shall make time for prayer, confession spiritual direction, solitude, rest, and lighter moments with the brothers. When possible, a priest who can celebrate daily mass for the brothers should be found or the brothers are to attend daily mass in the neighborhood of the retreat.

84. Scripture tells us that it is a holy and beneficial thought to pray for the dead. Accordingly, St. Francis wrote in his Rule that the brothers should take care to pray for the dead. The brothers are exhorted to remember frequently in their prayers the souls of the faithful departed, especially deceased brothers, relatives and benefactors. Following the Capuchin tradition, each local fraternity shall celebrate a memorial Mass for all deceased brothers, sisters, relatives, associates and benefactors on October third.

If a priest cannot be found to celebrate such a mass in one of our oratories, arrangements shall be made to have a mass offered for this intention at the local parish.

85. The Holy Rosary is an important tradition in the Franciscan family. Inspired by those Franciscans who came before us, we cultivate devotion to Our Lady and to the mysteries of the Lord's life praying the rosary and encouraging others to pray it.

PART IV Evangelical Counsels

Chap 8: To live in obedience

86. Like our Holy Father Francis, the brothers must exercise a loving obedience to the Church, especially to the Holy Father and our benevolent ordinary. Let them remember that Christ was obedient in all things, even to death on a cross.

87. We accept that a true, loving and responsible obedience is always submissive to the revealed law of God, the law of the Church and her hierarchy, and to the superior of the fraternity.

88. True and perfect obedience demands submission of one's will to legitimate authority without murmuring, without resentment, without resistance and with patience as Christ practiced it.

89. The superior is the guardian and animator of the community. Through his example and effort he stimulates continuity in the Catholic and Franciscan tradition. Therefore, all of the brothers are bound to obey him always faithful to the community and the

Franciscan tradition that he represents. “*Franciscan succession*” has been preserved, because the founder of the Franciscans of Life is a canonically professed (OFS) Franciscan. He and his successors are to be loved and respected as legitimate sons of St. Francis whom we all confess to be our seraphic father.

90. The brothers are to speak to him respectfully. The proper title for the superior is Father Superior. He may be addressed as such or by his proper name, Brother N.

91. Brothers are to avoid being argumentative with all figures of authority, especially the superior and the Church hierarchy. Nor may the brothers resist ideas, directions and corrections that come from the superior or the Church hierarchy.

92. We must all work to rehabilitate our thought patterns. The secular world from which we come has given us a distorted understanding of dignity, freedom and self-determination. We often bring it with us into the community. However, St. Francis always looked to Christ as his role model in life, especially in the area

of obedience. *To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps*, (1Peter 2:21). The brother who suffers for the sake of obedience shares in the dignity of the Son of God, making a free choice to submit to the will of another and is properly determined to fulfill God's plan for his life as it is made known to him through obedience.

93. Christ said, *Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls*, Mt 11:29). Obedience that is not humble is fraudulent. A man whose thoughts are always in conflict with the superior and complaining about the superior, even though he does not voice them, is a poor example of evangelical humility. Should a brother persist in this behavior throughout his years of formation, superiors and the brother himself must carefully reconsider the brother's fitness for our way of life.

94. If a brother believes that he has a better idea or better way of doing something, other than that proposed by lawful Church authority, let him submit to superiors in

all things that are not harmful to the soul. Such loving obedience is pleasing to God and man.

95. Let all of the brothers submit to all legitimate authority wherever they may find themselves. However, let them remember that authority that commands what is contrary to the moral law or contrary to the faith has no legitimate claim to compliance and may not be obeyed. Nor may they obey any authority that is in conflict with Church authority. The brothers must be faithful Catholics first.

96. When leaving and arriving, the brothers are to present themselves to the superior or his delegate for his blessing. When possible, the brother receiving the blessing should go down on one knee as a sign of respect to the Most Holy Trinity in whose name all blessings are given.

97. The brothers will allow the superior to read all personal mail that they receive or send; this includes electronic mail. The superior shall use this opportunity, not to spy on the brothers or to interfere

in their affairs of conscience or private relationship with their families, but to ensure that what is being communicated is helpful to the individual. If he should observe a danger to the spiritual growth of the brother, he should quietly and gently point it out to the brother and offer his assistance. If he cannot assist, he should point to a resource inside or outside of the community that can help the individual brother.

98. Except for that which is illegal or dangerous, the superior is bound by silence to reserve to himself whatever he reads in another brother's mail. When the content is a matter of conscience, it must be treated with even greater discretion and silence.

99. The superior is bound to obey the Holy Gospel, the law of the Church and her hierarchy, especially the Bishop of Rome and our benevolent ordinary.

100. The superior should take great care when commanding compliance *under obedience*. This should be reserved for extreme situations where a brother needs the stimulus of authority to submit to what is asked of him.

101. The community chapter is the highest local authority to which all must give submission with good will and trust. This includes the superior. He is charged with implementing and facilitating the decisions of the chapter. The chapter may not command that which is prohibited by Church law.

Chap 9: Without property (regular brothers)

102. The life of the brothers must be simple. They are to own nothing. That which they own in common is defined in the *Modus Procedendi*, which can only be interpreted by the major superior and can only be changed by a chapter with the approval of the local ordinary.

103. The Gospel counsel of poverty, in imitation of Christ, who became poor for our sakes, means that we live a life which is poor in fact and in spirit. It includes as essential elements, a life of work, the simple use of necessary things, the careful avoidance of the accumulation of costly or superfluous things, a humble and patient spirit of dependence on Divine

Providence, minority and limitation in the use and disposition of material goods.

104. We take our example from our Holy Father Francis, striving to detach from anything that interferes with our journey to God and even those things that though they may be neutral, may not be necessary. The more we have, the more we have to care for.

a. Therefore, the brothers shall not own their dwelling place. They are to live in houses that are either rented, on loan or temporarily assigned to their care, which are to be returned to the rightful owner after a period of no longer than five years.

105. The local community may own a car for use in ministry, education and service to the brothers. No brother may own a car. Superiors may not assign a car to a specific brother for his exclusive use. Such an action gives the impression of private ownership to others. The consecrated life must be characterized by a public and visible expression of material poverty.

106. No brother is to hold on to money that he receives as a gift, inheritance, payment for a service, through gambling, salary, stipend or personal donation. All money is to be turned into the community treasurer or the superior of the house when there is no treasurer.
107. All goods given to the community through the generosity of benefactors, should serve only the basic needs of the brothers. All excessive funds or superfluous goods (that is, beyond what is necessary to sustain the community for one month) should be given to the poor.
108. The superior of the house must ask the major superior for permission to keep money in a savings account. The major superior grants such permission where there is a real material need in the local house. No house should have a reservoir of money “for a rainy day.” This is not the way that poor men live in today’s world, nor the way of St. Francis.
109. The major superior may give the money to the vicar or the community’s general procurator who is responsible for depositing money in banks and

keeping track of accounts. However, the brothers may not have any kind of investment accounts. They are strictly bound to the necessary checking and savings accounts. The superior or the house chapter determines what accounts are necessary, provided that they do not conflict with these constitutions.

- i. By *necessary* we understand accounts where funds are held for material assistance to the poor, pay for expenses incurred in ministry and pay for the ordinary living, education and healthcare of the brothers.
- ii. Examples: telephone, utilities, rent, maintenance, groceries, medical bills, expenses for necessary travel, specialized education that the superior agrees that an individual brother or all the brothers should have.
- iii. Educational expenses do not include undergraduate and graduate degrees

begun before the brother entered the community.

iv. Necessary travel is determined by the superior or by consensus.

110. No one may ask for money from a community savings account or checking account. The brother who has a need must submit his need to the immediate superior who will decide if the need is reasonable and if it must be met immediately or it can wait. The superior must identify the community's financial priorities. Even when there is a need, it may be of a lesser degree than another need.

111. Let us always depend on Divine Providence to provide for our needs.

112. We use the means of social communication as a way to beg for what we need. Any money that is received over and beyond what we need must be returned to the donor. If the donor should refuse to take it back, then that money must be used for the direct service of the voiceless.

113. It is important to avoid the spirit of consumerism and entitlement that does nothing for the spiritual life, but often weighs us down with preoccupation. “*God made man to love him, serve him and be happy with him in heaven,*” (Baltimore Catechism). He did not create us to accumulate goods in this world. Therefore, we strive to avoid accumulating goods that are unnecessary for our spiritual life, health, safety, education and work. Having said this, we must never forget that the material goods that God allows man to have are not evil in themselves, but rather the abuse of these goods is disordered, thus to be avoided.

114. Let the brothers always remember that any money or object to which they have access or permission to use, truly belongs to their brothers, not to the individual. Therefore, the brothers should use said money with great frugality. They are accountable for damage, loss or abuse of material property that is placed in their hands for the service of the voiceless.

115. A brother may have use of a computer, wireless phone and other forms of technology, only with the

permission of the superior of the house. The superior may only grant permission for their use in education, the apostolate, care of the sick brothers, or any situation where he deems that the use of technology is justified, because it benefits the voiceless, not because it benefits the brothers.

116. We must endeavor to bring the spirit of poverty into our workplace and our homes. However, poverty must be properly understood. A misunderstanding of Evangelical Poverty can become a hindrance to our growth in holiness. Evangelical poverty is a form of asceticism and self-discipline. Through the practice of Evangelical Poverty we learn to control our desires, to attend to the needs of others before our own, to focus on those things that are truly important and above all, to place human dignity above material comforts.

117. Brothers are expected to restrain themselves when asking for things. On the other hand, they should always be attentive to the needs of the other brothers and when necessary and bring these to the attention of the local superior.

118. The brothers of each house will periodically evaluate all personal and communal goods to assure that only those things necessary for our life and work be used by them. This evaluation must take place in each fraternity four times a year, before the feast of St. Francis, after Christmas, during Lent and after Pentecost.
119. We guard ourselves against the temptation to own and to control by limiting ourselves to the things that we need to provide for our wellbeing, that of our loved ones and the poor.
120. Let it be understood and law of this fraternity that regular brothers are not to wear jewelry of any kind. If the brother needs a wristwatch, let it be the simplest and least expensive he can find. To avoid the temptation to deceive the self when shopping, the brothers are to go shopping in pairs. This way the help each other remain faithful to holy poverty.
121. Concerning the use of books, all books belong to the community. Let the brothers engage in different

forms of academic study without hindering the spirit of prayer and the practice of poverty by an inordinate attachment to learning. Every brother must complete a degree in higher education, but no one should be attached to books or academic titles. Let no brother go by titles such as “Doctor, Master, Professor, Engineer, or Don”. We study to serve not to achieve. Nor should the brothers place school work, examinations, grades and academic degrees before prayer, fraternity, in apostolic service and community duties.

122. Those brothers in higher education, working for advanced degrees must avoid the spirit of the world, which places high value on such titles and honors and which considers those who do not have them to have achieved less in life. Real achievement lasts for eternity, not for a few years. Therefore, we measure our achievement to the degree that we approach the perfection of charity toward God and neighbor, not to the degree that we succeed in the world of academics and work.

123. Every human being is a product of his culture, family, and personal experiences. Often, these impose values on us that are not the values of the Gospel, such as academic and financial success. In entering this way of life, a brother surrenders himself to Christ and in doing so; he sets aside the values to which he once subscribed as necessary signs of success and manhood.

124. Before first profession, regular brothers are to cede the administration of their goods to whomever they prefer and to make disposition freely for their use and revenue.

- a. A regular brother must renounce fully his goods before perpetual profession in a form valid, as far as possible, even in civil law; it is to take effect from the day of profession. The fraternity shall not intervene in these matters, nor shall the brother assign any part of his assets to the fraternity, unless it's for a just cause, such as not having siblings and other immediate relatives. This may be the case of a brother who is an only child.

Even this brother has the right to dispose of his assets without intervention from the community.

- b. A perpetually professed regular brother who renounces his goods according to the norm of these constitutions has renounced his goods fully due to the nature of the fraternity and loses the capacity of acquiring contrary to the vow of poverty. Moreover, whatever accrues to the professed after renunciation belongs to the community, not including that which he gave away before making perpetual vows or inheritances that he gave away before they were distributed.

125. The brothers will always reside in areas noted for poverty. If the neighborhood changes due to social or economic development which displaces the poor, the brothers must find residence in another poor area. The community house is then to be returned to its rightful owner, taking into account the owner's needs and rights. The houses of our community should be poor, simple and austere. They should have no look of luxury, nor contain those conveniences commonly

sought after by society. However, since these are not our property, but someone else's, in justice we must take proper care of the property and whatever comes with it, including appliances and grounds.

126. All goods and properties should be responsibly used and maintained in keeping with the charity and justice due to our benefactors.

127. Every brother is to have one grey tunic with a cowl, a scapular, cord and Tau suspended on a red shoelace over the heart. The Tau is the official symbol of the Franciscan family and the red lace from which it hangs is a reminder of Christ's blood poured out for our redemption. He shall also have two white shirts, two grey shirts and two pairs of grey pants. For his feet he shall have a pair of sandals. If health or age demands it, the brother may wear shoes as long as they are in keeping with material poverty. The brother must be poor, not just look poor.

Aspirant



128. When not wearing the grey tunic, the brothers must wear a work habit, which is a loose fitting shirt that reaches to the hips and has a short hood.

Proposed
Extern



129. For those occasions when the use of a habit would be inappropriate or not permitted, the brothers are to wear a white Habanera shirt, the Tau suspended around the neck on a red cord, a Tau pin on the left lapel of the shirt, grey slacks with a flat front panel (no jeans),

Proposed
Regular



130. The following is the proposed way of dress for the brothers.

a. For formal dress, the brothers shall wear a

grey shirt with a banded collar, buttoned up to the top, a Tau suspended from the red shoelace, grey slacks, black belt, sandals or brown shoes.

- b. From the first Sunday of Advent until Ash Wednesday, due to climate conditions, §130a applies whenever the habit cannot be worn.
- c. Ordinarily, the brothers shall not wear suits unless compelled by necessity to do so. The local superior must approve.
- d. In keeping with poverty, let us not just attempt to appear poor, but be poor in fact. Every brother should have
- e. A habit (grey tunic, cowl, scapular, white cincture around the waste and red shoelace with Tau around the neck.
- f. One pair of sandals, one pair of brown leather shoes, and one pair of sports shoes. Any other shoes must be requested from the superior.
- g. Two white Habanera shirts and no more than two pairs of grey slacks.
- h. One work tunic with a soft hood and a pair of denim work pants.
- i. One week supply of underwear
- j. T-shirts are required.

k. Sleeveless t-shirts are never allowed.

131. When necessary the brothers may wear shorts and bathing pants reaching to the knees. A superior may require that a brother dress differently, if he feels that the dress is immodest or inappropriate for the occasion.

132. Nor are the brothers ever to go bare chested, even at a beach or pool, unless they are in the water.

133. It is always tempting for parents to give gifts to their sons on special occasions. However, the brothers are to make it known to family and friends that they are not allowed to accept gifts of any kind, especially money. They may suggest that such funds be donated to the apostolate in which the brothers engage. If it seems that refusing to accept a gift will cause someone to feel hurt or even offended, let the brothers accept the gift with gratitude and then present it to the superior who will decide what is to be done with the gift. The superior may allow a brother to keep a gift that does not violate Holy Poverty.

134. On the different types of property that the brothers may acquire or administer

a. There are different types of property, assets and material resources. Everything that is said here about property also applies to assets and other material resources.

i. Personal property is that which is acquired by the individual brother or for the individual brother. The regular brothers are to surrender all gifts to the superior who will determine what the brother may or may not keep for his use.

ii. Common property is that which is acquired by the fraternity or for the fraternity. It is not designated for any particular individual or particular work of the apostolate. Therefore, the superior, with the consent of the council, will decide how it is to be used. All brothers are welcome to make suggestions as to most responsible use of said property.

iii. Designated property is that which the fraternity acquires for a specific purpose. No one may make use of said property or resources for any other purpose than that for

which it was marked. In the event that it cannot be used, it should be returned to the donor or if the donor is unavailable, it must be surrendered to the diocesan bishop to be used or disposed of according to Canon Law and diocesan policy.

Chap 10: In celibate chastity (regular brothers)

135. We are all called to chastity. Therefore, we must put on Christ who is the model for chastity. Chastity takes on two expressions: conjugal chastity and celibate chastity. Regular brothers are to observe celibate chastity. *For guidance in conjugal chastity, see the section dedicated to the extern brothers.*

136. The Gospel counsel of chastity for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt. 19:11-12) is seen as an eschatological sign of the future life, and it involves the obligation of perfect continence in celibacy. As a unique gift of an undivided heart given to God, chastity is a proven source of more abundant fruitfulness for our own human and spiritual growth as well as for the good of others. This surpassing gift

must be safeguarded and nourished by a wholehearted response to the Lord's grace.

137. The brothers are to respond to the grace of God through a life of continuous conversion and self-emptying in order to live a chaste life. We can do this chiefly by fostering:

- a. A fervent life of personal and communal prayer;
- b. A deep love for the Holy Eucharist;
- c. A personal love for and confidence in the Mother of God, devotion to St. Joseph and all the saints;
- d. A genuine participation in the fraternal life of the community;
- e. Meditation on and study of the Word of God;
- f. Frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance and regular spiritual direction;
- g. A joyful austerity;
- h. Sacrificial service towards one another and those in need;
- i. A healthy discipline applied to a balanced way of life made up of prayer, manual labor, study, recreation and exercise.

138. The celibate brother gives himself to Christ foregoing his right to marriage. Realizing that the right to marriage is the one gift that God has given to man that no one can take away, it becomes the only possession that he can freely give back to God as gift.
139. The brothers are to observe chastity as Christ and his mother observed it, always placing God's will for their lives before their own.
140. The celibate brother is the prophetic voice that points to life in the eternal Kingdom where we shall not be given to another as husband or wife, but shall spend eternity in communion with the Trinity. He is like John the Baptist who pointed to and prepared the way for the Lord.
141. They are to avoid all forms of entertainment, conversation and relationships that compromise chastity. The brother must work to develop mastery over his senses and appetites through prayer, the frequent reception of the Sacraments, abstinence and fasting.

142. The brothers may never participate in any activity or endeavor that supports the desecration of human sexuality. Attendance at immodest functions or events at which immodest or immoral behavior is exhibited or fostered is forbidden. The penitent should avoid the near occasions of sin in all circumstances and should strive always to give good example to others. Let us remember that what the world presents as “sex” is an illusion. It fails to represent faithful and productive love that exists between Christian spouses.
143. They are to maintain healthy relationships with members of both sexes and treat every man and woman with respect and kindness.
- a. Any man unable to relate in a healthy manner to both genders is to be excluded from admission to this fraternity.
144. Let the brothers avoid all relationships, situations and conversations that can give the impression of sexual impropriety.

145. Custody of all the senses, especially the eyes, is a great aid in avoiding temptations against chastity. Like Saint Francis, we aspire to achieve perfect custody of the senses.

146. Through our life in community each brother encourages the other in fidelity to God and his people. Community is where they can find human interaction in an environment conducive to a life of virtue.

a. On human sexuality

i. Through Sacred Scripture God reveals that He created man in his own image and likeness, “male and female he created them,” (Gn1:27).

ii. Because God created man as a sexual being, there is a natural and holy sexual tension and attraction between men and women.

iii. However, brothers who have consecrated their lives to the Lord through the profession of celibate chastity freely give up the pursuit of these feelings and attractions, not because they

are bad, but because Christ has called him to an exclusive relationship with Him.

- iv. Every brother shall reflect on the true meaning and end of sex as it has been revealed through scripture, sacred tradition and the magisterium. God's plan for man is far different from that which the world presents in movies, books, social media, and other forms of human communication.
- v. Very often parents and culture misrepresent the true meaning of sex when they teach boys that they must like and pursue girls at an early age, when children are still working on other important physical, intellectual, psychological and social skills. In some cases, boys are encouraged to date and engage in sex during adolescence, even early adolescence. Such behavior is contrary to the culture of life that the Franciscan of Life embraces, because it is in conflict with God's plan for man.

147. Those of us who may have grown up in such a culture must be courageous and humble enough to loudly admit that our sexual formation was malformation in order to move on to a holier expression of human sexuality whereby we become the reflection of chaste Christ.

148. Let us display a selfless and mature human affection worthy of authentic disciples of Jesus Christ. We are to avoid any friendships which express an unhealthy emotional dependence. Experience teaches us that exclusiveness and possessiveness are detrimental to our human and spiritual development, our common life and our consecrated chastity. Friendships outside of the fraternity are to be discouraged.

149. This does not mean that we reject former friends or family. It means that we recognize that we are no longer part of that body.. Ordinarily, we do not attend parties, sports events, theater and other forms of entertainment with persons outside the community, including parents, siblings and other relatives. For

just cause, the superior may give permission to a brother to attend such an event or activity.

PART V Statutes

Chap 11: Admission to our way of life and formation

150. The fraternity is open to Catholic men who demonstrate fidelity to the Church and who profess everything that the Church believes.
151. Candidates must be at least 18 years of age and have received all of the Sacraments of Christian Initiation.
152. Those who aspire to the consecrated life must be single or if they have been married must be widowed with no minor or dependent children. They must be free of any canonical impairment to the profession of celibacy.
153. If the candidate is a cleric, he must comply with the requirements of Canon Law and the policies of his diocese pertaining to clerics who join societies of apostolic life.
154. Every member of the fraternity shall contribute to the common fund of the fraternity.

155. The formation process takes place in stages. Each stage is designed to help the individual grow in faith, discern his vocation, acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in the work of the fraternity, and deepen his ties with the fraternity and the Church.
- a. Aspirancy: This period is optional. The superior may dispense from it. During this period the individual visits with the fraternity without any commitment. He may attend meetings, classes and observe our work. He may participate to the degree that he's able to do so.
 - b. Postulancy: The postulancy period is no less than 6 months and no more than 12 months. The postulant becomes familiar with the work of the fraternity by taking an active part in workshops and courses that prepare him to work in pro-life ministry. Regular brothers must do their postulancy in the house of formation. Extern brothers attend weekly lessons at the house of formation. If the postulant absents himself more than 90 consecutive days from the house of formation, he must remain a postulant until he has

completed at least 150 consecutive days present in the formation house.

i. The program of studies for postulants must include

1. Catechism of the Catholic Church
2. Liturgy of the Hours
3. Life of St. Francis
4. Life of St. Maximilian Maria Kolbe
5. Evangelium Vitae
6. Prayer

c. Novitiate: The right to admit candidates to the novitiate belongs to major superior after consulting with the community in which the novice lives.

i. Superiors are not to admit to the novitiate secular clerics without consulting their proper ordinary or those who, burdened by debts, cannot repay them.

ii. If a juridic person has contracted debts and obligations even with the permission of the superiors, he is bound to answer for them.

iii. Before candidates are admitted to the novitiate, they must show proof of baptism, confirmation, and free status. Any candidate

who demonstrates an immature attachment to parents, people, places or things is unsuitable for our way of life.

- iv. If it concerns the admission of clerics or those who had been admitted in another institute of consecrated life, in a society of apostolic life, or in a seminary, there is additionally required the testimony of, the local ordinary, in the case of diocesan clerics and the major superior of the institute or society in the case of those belonging to another institute
- v. The novitiate, through which life begins in our fraternity, is arranged so that the novices better understand their divine vocation and indeed one which is proper to the fraternity, experience the Franciscan manner of living, and form their mind and heart in the spirit of Saint Francis of Assisi.
- vi. Their intention and suitability should be tested.
 - 1. Novices are to have limited contact with family members, including parents. Telephone calls to parents are limited to one day per week, always under the supervision of the formator and no longer

than 15 minutes. Telephone calls to other relatives and friends are not allowed.

2. All mail, incoming and outgoing, is first read by the formator who decides if the content is to the spiritual benefit of the brother or a danger. This practice continues throughout the life of the brother, unless the major superior or the chapter dispenses from it.
- vii. The novitiate period is 12 to 24 months.
- viii. An absence from the novitiate house which lasts more than three months, either continuous or interrupted, renders the novitiate invalid. An absence which lasts more than 10 days must be made up.
- ix. The time of the novitiate is to be devoted solely to the task of formation and consequently novices are not to be occupied with studies and functions which do not directly serve this formation.
- x. During this time, the candidate becomes familiar with the Rule of Penance, the life and works of St. Francis and other Franciscan saints. He explores more deeply the Rule of

Penance, the Constitutions and Statutes of the Franciscans of Life, Franciscan Spirituality and Church writings on the sacredness of human life, especially, *Evangelium Vitae*. It is a time to go deeper into prayer, scripture, and the spiritual life.

156. Christ calls some brothers to the consecrated life.

Such brothers are known as regular brothers from the Latin term “regula”, one who lives by the rule. These brothers shall observe these constitutions and the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance, living in community or as hermits, vowing to live according the Evangelical Counsels of obedience, poverty, chastity and a fourth vow to bring the Gospel of Life to the voiceless.

157. After completing their period of formation, the regular brothers profess to live according to the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance using the following formula:

- a. *I, Brother N, vow and promise to Almighty God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, our Holy Father St. Francis, and you Brother, to observe for [no less than one year and no more than three], the Rule of Penance and the constitutions of the Franciscans of life, living in obedience, without property and in chastity. Also, I freely vow to proclaim the Gospel of Life to the voiceless.*

158. Profession of the Evangelical Counsels may be renewed for a period not to last longer than six years after completing the novitiate, with the consent of the major superior after consultation with the community in which the candidate lives.

159. The profession is received by the major superior personally or through his designee, who must be a brother that has completed his formation. .

- a. From postulancy to perpetual profession, formation cannot be longer than 10 years.
- b. Perpetual profession can be anticipated for a just cause, but not by more than three months. Temporary profession can be anticipated by no more than one month.

- c. The brother must have reached his twenty-first birthday before making perpetual profession.

160. Parents: Our response to Christ's call is for the salvation of souls, our own and those of the world, especially our parents'. At times, parents may resist the idea of a son consecrating his life to God, the Church, the fraternity and the Evangelical Counsels. They may protest and attempt to put up many barriers between the brother and his vocation.

- a. Every brother must work to detach from his parents' vocational plans for him and the vision that they have of their son's place in the world. This is not simple for the brother or the parent. Therefore, superiors are to be very attentive to the needs of these brothers and help them cope effectively with such hardships, especially through the use of prayer and the sacraments.
- b. The son must place his parents in the hands of Divine Providence, always trusting that no one can care more for his parents than God.
- c. The brothers must refrain from involving themselves in the affairs of their parents and make an effort to protect their privacy and the privacy of

the community from external parental involvement.

Chap 12: Our government

161. In keeping with Franciscan tradition, the fraternity shall be governed by an elected General Minister who is the servant of all. He is also known as the Superior General. His role is to execute the duties of his office according to the Rule of Penance and to lead his brothers in the observance of the Rule, Constitutions and Modus Procedendi of the fraternity. It is also his role to represent the fraternity.

162. The Minister is subject to obey the Holy Father, Canon Law, the local Ordinary and the General Chapter of the fraternity.

163. He shall not make laws for the fraternity; but he does have the authority to make policies that are binding to specific situations, for a specific period of time and which cease to exist when he leaves office. Whereas a law can only be made by the General

Chapter and is binding until it is abrogated by another General Chapter or the proper ecclesial authority.

164. The General Minister is loved and respected as the legitimate successor of St. Francis and the founder of the fraternity. He is to be obeyed according to the admonitions of St. Francis.

a. *“And if at times a subject sees things which would be better or more useful to his soul than those which the superior commands, let him sacrifice his will to God, let him strive to fulfill the work enjoined by the superior. This is true and charitable obedience, which is pleasing to God and to one's neighbor. If, however, a superior command anything to a subject that is against his soul it is permissible for him to disobey,”* (Admonition 3).

165. The brothers are morally obliged to disregard any command that is sinful or contrary to Church law. Obedience without truth is slavery.

166. If the superior or the governance of the fraternity violates natural law, the law of the Church or a statute

of these constitutions, the brothers must make haste to make it known to the proper ecclesial authority.

167. Arbitrary disobedience based on preference, personalities and opinions is inconsistent with the mind and life of St. Francis who imitated Christ's obedience to the Father submitting himself to the cross.

168. The Minister is assisted by four counselors elected from among the professed brothers. Their rank on the council is according to the order of election, with the First Counselor being the Vicar of the fraternity.

169. The minister is elected for six years.

170. The council is elected for three years, but never on the year that the minister is elected.

171. In the event that the minister cannot complete his term, the vicar becomes the Minister provided that there are less than three years remaining to the minister's term.

172. If there is more than three years remaining to the minister's term, the vicar shall assume the position of minister and call for an election within 90 days after assuming the position. He may be elected as Minister.
173. The brother elected minister in the middle of a previous minister's is eligible for re-election at the conclusion of the sixth year of the current term.
174. The second counselor shall be the procurator, by default. He is the treasurer of the fraternity and the person responsible for acquiring whatever goods the fraternity needs for its work and daily life. However, the procurator may not use fraternity assets without the consent of the superior. When the expense is greater than \$500.00 the consent of the council is necessary. The vote shall be by simple majority. The superior reserves the right to veto the counsel, in which case, the local fraternity may vote and pass the motion with two-thirds of the fraternity in favor.
175. The highest authority in the fraternity is the Holy Father. Every brother shall love, respect and obey him as the Vicar of Christ, the Successor of St. Peter,

and the Living Magisterium. He is the living law of the Church, because Jesus Christ, the eternal and all perfect Law Giver, has placed His law in the heart and mind of Peter to comfort his brothers and tend to his flock, (Jn 21:15-17).

176. Each house is governed by the house chapter and the superior, known in the Franciscan tradition as *the Guardian*. The superior is bound to obey the chapter when the chapter commands according to the rights given to it by Canon Law and Proper Law.

177. Brothers are free to seek out a superior and open their hearts and minds to him, bearing their needs, hopes, strengths, and weaknesses. The superior is to listen with an attentive ear and a loving heart. He must protect that information which is normally part of the internal forum or which the brother reveals to him as confidential or secret.

178. As St. Francis teaches us, superiors are not to be second-guessed every step of the way. A brother may ask questions, if he does not understand what the superior wants or the superior's goal. Once he

receives the answer, he is bound to obey the superior, unless he is commanded contrary to the law of the Church and the faith of her people.

179. A superior may be removed from office by the local ordinary. The fraternity can ask the local ordinary to remove the superior from office. To do so, the brothers must gather in a special chapter, not to make law, but for the purpose of voting on the superior's removal.

180. Legitimate reasons for the superiors removal are insanity, scandal, grave violation of the law, apostasy and any other violation for which Canon Law justifies the removal of a superior.

181. That being said, the brothers cannot remove a superior from office without the final approval of the local ordinary of the diocese where the community was founded.

182. In electing superiors and counselors, let the brothers be very clear that there are to be no politics involved. Ours is not democratic community of that

sort. .While it is true that we elect our superiors and the council; it is also true that very often brothers bring with them values, worldviews, or language that is not common in the Franciscan life. Theses should be avoided.

183. Any brother who is a regular brother and has completed his formation, including three years to first profession, may vote and be elected to an office in the community, except superior general. The superior general and the vicar must be at least 30-years old.

184. The election shall be held in a chapter room with proper nominations and secret ballots. The moment that the candidate for superior general accepts the election, he is the superior general, even if his installation is delayed a few days, but no longer than one week.

185. The Archbishop of Miami and the Director for Religious must be informed of the election of the new superior. The Archbishop has the right to veto the election. He may appoint a temporary superior until another election is held.

186. Because the fraternity is young, elections are suspended until there are at least 20 brothers who can vote and be elected. However, chapters can be held with at least 80 percent of the brothers present.

187. Let us remember that governance is a form of service to one's brothers, not a promotion. Let those who govern do so with the compassion, insight, gentleness and firmness of Christ always remembering that we are an apostolic community and must govern and be governed it was with Christ and His apostles.

Chap 13: Our interaction with the secular sphere

188. In keeping with the simplicity and universal spirit of fraternity of our Holy Father St. Francis, the brothers are to avoid all forms of partisan politics, including seeking election to public office. Like our Father Francis, they shall be a leaven of peace, justice and equity toward all, regardless of individual circumstance. They are bound to observe the rules of

responsible citizenship as ordained by the Church and the Conference of Bishops, giving witness to the fact that faith enlightens citizenship.

189. Especially in situations of political conflict, national and international, the brothers shall bear witness to the fact that all life is sacred. They shall engage in works that promote peace among peoples of all nations and shall promote respect and love for every man. Let them take example from St. Maximilian Kolbe, who at the appointed hour gave his life for a man whom he did not know and of a different faith. And at the hour of his execution, handed his life over to his executioners and graced them with a final smile filled with love. The sons of St. Francis are faithful disciples of the Master who begged his Father to forgive those whom society would have identified as his enemies. In the same manner, the brothers shall concern themselves with the protection of all life and the promotion of peace. They shall consider no man their enemy, but only see in him a brother.

190. The brothers shall take an active part in any activity sanctioned by the Church for the protection of life, the preservation of religious freedom, and the education of those who do not yet understand the Gospel of Life.

191. They shall set an example of obedience and fidelity to the Church whenever the faithful are called upon to exercise moral and responsible citizenship. They may ask questions for the purpose of calcification and understanding about a direction that may come from the local diocesan bishop or the Conference of Bishops. However, they cannot make a public comment contrary to the request of the bishops or the Conference, nor may they publicly question such requests and statements.

192. As sons of St. Francis, it is not our place to question the hierarchy in public, even on prudential matters. We never question the hierarchy on matters of governance, faith and morals, unless it is obvious that we are commanded to sin. Our place in the world is to set an example of fidelity to the Church and cooperation with the hierarchy.

PART VI Concerning the Extern Brothers

These are the statutes and rules that are specific to the extern brothers. Each section corresponds to a section in the main body of this constitution as indicated in the parenthesis next to the subject line. Unless a difference is indicated in this section of the Constitution, the extern brothers are to observe what is said in the main body of this text.

On those subjects that we specifically indicate in this section, the rule presented here takes precedence over what may be prescribed in the main body of the Constitution.

Chap 14: Fraternal and family life **(Corresponds to Chap 5)**

193. The extern brothers are truly members of this fraternity. They enjoy the rights of every brother and have the same obligations toward the community.

- a. To participate in ongoing formation with the fraternity

- b. Assist at community events
- c. Contribute to the financial support of the community
- d. Participate and vote in a general chapter for the regular and extern brothers.

194. Attentive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the example of our father, St. Francis, we are attentive to the needs of each brother and his family. Like our spiritual father, we realize that *the Christian family constitutes a specific revelation and realization of ecclesial communion. It is a community of faith, hope and charity [and] assumes singular importance in the Church, evident in the Gospel*, (CCC 2204).

195. Our father, St. Francis, did not set out to found an order. He set out to do penance for his sins and those of the world. By his example of detachment, love and joy, he drew to him a family of brothers and sisters. He was truly a father, as is evidenced by the many forms of Franciscan life in the Church.

196. Francis' love for the family and his understanding of the family as a sign of God's presence in the world

is evident in his love for his brothers and sisters and in the foundation of the Order of Penance. Wishing to keep families together, he discouraged men and women who sought to abandon their wedded state to enter the religious life. Instead, he wrote for them the *Rule of Penance*, which allowed them to consecrate their lives to the Gospel. Later, he welcomed secular priests who heard the call to follow the Gospel in the same manner, but needed to remain at their posts serving the local Church. Moreover, he called all of these men and women, “Fratelli”.

197. St. Francis teaches us to follow Christ and Christ calls us to fidelity. Those brothers who are husbands must be as faithful to their wives as Christ is to his Church. Let them always put their wives ahead of themselves, for the covenant of marriage is a covenant of charity. Let them strive for dialogue and cooperation with their wives and remember that their first duty before God is to love their wives. As true sons of the Church and St. Francis, the married brothers must be firmly resolved to be faithful to the unitive and procreative dimensions of marriage. The

husband must surrender himself to his wife in love, always open to the conception of new life.

198. The brother must be a truly Catholic father, educating his children in the faith through word and example. Just as St. Francis taught the first Brothers and Sisters of Penance, today's Franciscan of Life, must give witness to the world of Christ's unconditional love for man, regardless of the challenges, through his unconditional love for his wife and family. Let the father be the first to practice charity and compassion toward the poor, detachment from those things that are unnecessary for our wellbeing, and exercising simplicity in all forms of recreation, entertainment, dress, food and possessions. When the father provides the guidance and example, Christ will supply the grace.

Chap 15: Life of penance

(Corresponds to Chap 6)

199. Those brothers who have spouses and children are to set an example of austerity and simplicity in their choice of food and the manner of using God's gifts at

the table, without proselytizing. They should encourage and teach their families to appreciate the gifts that the Lord puts on the table for us by using food with restraint, always remembering the poor who have little or nothing to eat. In their homes, they shall do everything in their power to avoid the waste of food and the inordinate expense in food.

Chap 16: Life of prayer

(Corresponds to Chap 7)

200. The same spirit of prayer that inspires the regular brothers also inspires the extern brothers. The life of prayer supports and is supported by the extern brother's state in life.

201. Every brother shall pray Morning Prayer (lauds) and Evening Prayer (verses) from the breviary as indicated in chapter 7 of this constitution. Praying more of the liturgical hours is praiseworthy, but is not often possible for those brothers who are husbands, fathers and employees.

202. The brothers shall also attempt to attend Holy Mass at least once during the week, that is, besides Sunday. For no reason is a brother to exempt himself from Holy Mass on a holy day of obligation.
203. Like the regular brothers, the extern brothers are to cultivate a relationship with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, as did St. Francis before us. The brothers are to visit the Blessed Sacrament at least once a week for a brief period of contemplative prayer.
204. Let the brothers meditate on the mysteries of Christ's life and that of his Most Blessed Mother praying the holy rosary at least on Saturdays, which is the ordinary day that the Church reserves for the Virgin Mary.
205. As much as possible, the brothers are to educate and engage their spouses and children in the life of prayer and the celebration of the Eucharist. They must never forget that they are models of prayer.

Chap 17: Obedience

(Corresponds to Chap 8)

206. Let the brothers be obedient to the Holy Father, the local ordinary and the superior of this society.

207. Obedience must be an act of charity, not duty. The brothers obey because they desire to conform to Christ, not because they must obey. No extern brother shall be bound to obey the superior under penalty of sin.

208. A married brother must follow the proper law of marriage, which is ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring. Let each brother submit his will to the fulfillment of the marriage covenant.

Chap 18: Poverty

(Corresponds to Chap 9)

209. The brothers should attempt to furnish their homes and surroundings according to guidelines of modesty, simplicity, and in conformity to the state or

employment of the individual and to reasonable customs of the place where they find themselves.

210. However, compliance with this statute must not create more work or inconvenience for other family members. We must bear in mind that it is we who are committed to the Franciscan way of life, not our friends and family members. We are to bring the Gospel into the family and workplace with a spirit of gentleness, patience and discretion.

211. Even in the relationship between spouses can the poverty of the Gospel find expression, for husbands are often called upon to surrender their wishes, set aside their opinions, sacrifice their time and let go of material things in order to meet the needs of the wife in whom he finds completion as a human being.

Chap 19: Conjugal chastity

(Corresponds to Chap 10)

212. The married brother gives himself to Christ through his wife to the exclusion of all others. It is

through his intimate relationship with her that he finds the path to salvation.

213. Revelation affirms the complementarity between man and woman. God created man, male and female, so that he would never be alone. Jesus reminds us that a man leaves his father and mother to cleave to his wife and the two become one.

214. Every thought, action and belief must reinforce the unity and indissolubility of marriage and be understood as part of the marriage covenant. By the same reason, this society deems it contrary to the Gospel for married brothers to be careless in their relationship with men and women outside of their marriage, always being careful that such relationships and interactions do not lead one to sin against chastity. Such a sin is also a grave sin of injustice against God, the Church and the spouse, all of which have a legitimate claim on a man's fidelity. The married brother builds the Kingdom of God through fidelity to his calling.

215. Respect towards the wife is also part of conjugal chastity. God did not create Eve to be at the service of Adam. Nor did he create her to satisfy his desires in a relationship where satisfaction, not love, is the goal of intimacy. Let the brothers love their wives as Christ loves the Church and as Francis teaches us to love Christ.

Chap 20: Admission to our way of life
(Corresponds to Chap 11)

216. No married man shall be admitted as an extern brother without the written consent of his wife, nor shall any man who subscribes to birth control and other practices contrary to the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life and the ends of matrimony.

217. The candidate must be a practicing Catholic. Any candidate who is not Catholic is to be excluded from the Society.

218. The age for entering formation as an extern must be at least 18 and not older than 60. Candidates for

the extern brothers go through the same stages of formation as the regular brothers. (See Chapter 11)

219. They shall gather for formation at least weekly. They shall also attend other workshops, conferences and courses that enhance their knowledge of the spiritual life and form them to proclaim the Gospel of Life wherever they may be.

220. At the end of his formation, the extern brother shall promise to live according to the Rule of Penance and these constitutions in the following manner.

a. *I, Brother N, solemnly promise to Almighty God, the Immaculate Virgin Mary, our Holy Father St. Francis, and you Brother, to observe for one year, the Rule of the Brothers and Sisters of Penance of 1221 and the constitutions of the Franciscans of Life.*

221. Our manner of dress:

a. A Franciscan of Life is not required to dispose of their existing wardrobe when he begins to adapt his life to these statutes. He may keep and wear his

existing clothing that conforms to the Rule the rule and constitution.

- b. For formal occasions, the extern brothers shall wear the colors of the community, a white Habanera shirt, Tau suspended from a red shoelace and grey slacks.

Conclusion

Here concludes the Constitutions and Statutes of the Franciscans of Life. May they guide each brother in giving greater glory and honor to God and in making his Immaculate Mother known, especially to those who have not discovered her maternal heart. Let us strive to live the according to the Holy Rule of Penance and these statutes that we may serve as the voice of the voiceless and Christ's voice to those who are unloved.

"Observe His commands with your whole heart and fulfill His counsels with a perfect mind. Give praise to Him since He is good and exalt Him by your deeds, for He has sent you into the entire world for this reason: that in word and deed you may give witness to His voice and bring everyone to know that there is no one who is all-powerful except Him."

**- St. Francis of Assisi,
Letter to the Entire Order**